

THE
MUTABILITY
OF
HUMAN LIFE;
OR,
MEMOIRS
OF
ADELAIDE, Marchionefs of MELVILLE.

By a LADY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON,

Printed for J. BEW, in Pater-Noster-Row.

1777.

X67-766 VOL. 2

THE
MUTABILITY
OF
HUMAN LIFE, &c.

Miss HOWARD to Miss MEYNEL.

Elysium-Place.

I HAVE undergone great anxiety of mind, my dear Harriot, since I wrote last, and almost betrayed myself from fear of being known. Ah! my amia-friend, how necessary it is to be always on one's guard.

VOL. II.

B

Walking

2 THE MUTABILITY OF

Walking a few days since with Lord Villars, he informed me that he recollected having seen me at Laurel-Grove the day before I bid adieu to it. You may imagine I was struck with exceeding surprize and affliction at the news; and, finding Lord N—— had told him I was gone to London, my unhappiness increased, thinking he knew my whole history. On my knees I besought him to conceal it, but had not time to finish my speech, before he raised me by the name of Avelini. I started, for it then occurred to me how circumstances stood; and I was not deceived. I found, by further conversation, he thought Avelini was my real name, and that I was an Italian, which I judged prudent silently to consent to, but continued to intreat he would not mention having seen me at Lord N——'s, which he good-naturedly

turedly promised. His humanity was conspicuous as usual—He wept with me, and asked if it was in his power to remedy the misfortunes I complained of. Having thanked him, and answered in the negative, he intreated to know why I refused Mr. Clairville. To put a period to his Lordship's wonder, I answered that I was engaged to another. He then made fresh offers of completing my happiness with the object of my affection, if fortune was the essential. I told him it was not; and by flight, my dear friend, put a period to a dissimulation I could with difficulty retain. It is very mortifying to be obliged to make use of it to so worthy a friend as Lord Villars, but my situation requires it. Ah! Harriot, how my days are spent in affliction!

4 THE MUTABILITY OF

It gives me pleasure, however, to find your vivacity is returned. May you long enjoy peace of mind, my dear friend !

I hear Lady Di Horton is just arrived at Shenkin-Hall. They have been some time very busy in preparing for her reception. Miss Shenkin has talked of nothing but her Ladyship, and told Lord Villars he must infallibly lose his heart with so charming a creature. If she is worthy of him, I shall wish him success. Adieu !

Lady DI HORTON to Madame ST. CLARE.

Shenkin-Hall.

I VOW, my dear St. Clare, I am not in the least surprized that you should be so astonished at my journey to this hideous

deous part of the globe, among hills, dales, rocks, valleys, goats, 'squires (who may pass under the denomination of brutes), and a jumble of the Lord knows what. I don't suppose a woman of my fashion ever was in this remote and almost unknown country, except just *en passant* to some politer place in her travels, though I believe this does not lead to any other country.—I can't tell—for I ever abhorred distracting my brains with geography.—But a frolic brought me here, St. Clare, and hopes of subduing one man gave me courage to support the fatigue of travelling over the horrid mountains, and causing a dense cloud to hang over the *beau monde* by my absence. Winny Shenkin sent me word that dear creature Lord Villars was here. Having seen him once, I ever since doated on him to distraction; but, as he

6 THE MUTABILITY OF

was flying from place to place, could never catch him. Now, I was quite in raptures to find that he intended some stay at his uncle's, being the most fortunate opportunity imaginable for making him my slave, as my charms must appear in their full lustre among a parcel of awkward frights!—mere Hot-tentots!—so I immediately repaired hither. The good folks here, too, are so happy at the honour I do them; and Mrs. Shenkin exerts herself much at her skill in cookery and confectionary. Last night she honoured us with a new invention, which was introduced in the desert. In the middle was placed a boy in the action of letting off squibs; another sat below with a small wax taper, which being lighted after fixed on the table, set the squibs reporting. The 'squires, being in their usual state, *drunk*, began
to

to take offence at the alarm, till that sweet creature Villars set them right as to the intention of the thing. Their hideous roars of laughter then absolutely stunned one, and the contriver was quite happy in the applause she met with.

Such a parcel of 'squires and their wives repair here from forty miles round to compliment me, or rather to see what a fine lady is, that I am absolutely weary of bending my knees to them. Such figures you never beheld in your days! Oh! they are attired frightful beyond your conception; and so voracious for news, that I really am obliged to make lies for to get into favour with them. The only tolerable creature I have met with, beside Shenkin, is a girl called Miss Howard, who is a heel-treader, or companion, to Villars's aunt. Now the

B 4

girl

8 THE MUTABILITY OF

girl apparently must have had a good education, for her behaviour shews it. I could not find out her origin from the men, so applied to Mrs. Villars, who is almost an idiot. She told me, "the good girl was a Creole by birth, and had been reduced by the loss of a relation on whom she depended." Likely enough! so let it rest. She is grave and sensible, which is proper for one of her present station. But my adorable Villars as yet treats me only with a respect due to my quality, yet I think I can perceive him to sigh a little. Why should I doubt the effect of my charms, when I have no rival. Clandon is here, but he is not a fit object to flirt with. Then poor Clairville is fighting after Howard—She's welcome to the insipid creature. I am going with Winny Shenkin to pay a visit at a small town, called ———, for a few days; when

when I return, thou shalt have an account of its inhabitants from

Thine heartily,

DIANA HORTON.

P. S. Let me hear how you proceed with Silvio.

Lord VILLARS to Lord DUNCAN.

Elysium-Place.

I AM more unhappy than ever, Charles; the lovely Silena adheres still closer to my heart. But she is lost to me—never can be mine—and the idea drives me to distraction.

Lady Di Horton is arrived at Shenkin-Hall, and is spreading her net for me; but her flirting Ladyship is mis-

B 5

taken,

10 THE MUTABILITY OF

taken, and will be exceedingly disappointed. She affects a fondness for my adorable Silena, that she may have a proper excuse for coming here; but I perceive Miss Howard seems not very desirous of her friendship.

Her Ladyship was laughing the other day at the little attention the ladies of this country pay to dress, that very important article, especially the married women. "What do you think of it, Howard?" said she; "are they not the frightfullest dowdies you ever beheld? Such heads!—Oh! *mon Dieu!*"

My sweet girl laughed at Lady Di's manner of expressing herself, but made a very just remark in her answer. She allowed that "Lady Di was in the right, for that it was very absurd for women

to neglect dress intirely after marriage. They should then be decently in the fashion, she said, as well as when single. If they had studied dress to gain a husband, they should persevere in it to preserve his affection. Men in general, she added, were apt to be fickle, and despise their wives, therefore they ought to endeavour their utmost to avert the evil. That when a man saw other women set off to advantage, and his wife an awkward antique figure among them, it must sensibly wound both his pride and love to find her rather an object of contempt. This being repeated, by degrees alienates his affection from her. The ladies, she added, might perhaps urge œconomy in their excuse; but it made very little difference in expence, except fashion was carried to the height, and that was out of the question. That old ladies were

12 THE MUTABILITY OF

excepted, as to appear clean and decent, according to their age and station in life, was all to be required of them."

"Bravo, Miss Howard," cried her sprightly Ladyship, "I vow you have spoke my very sentiments."

But now, Duncan, I must recite to thee a discourse I overheard between them, which has made an impression upon me; though whatever the charming Silena says always does so.

They were walking together in a covered walk in the garden at Mr. Shenkin's, when Lady Di, being tired, sat down, and desired her companion to do the same. I was not far behind them; but the trees being interwoven, they could not perceive me. Lady Di began with,

with, "Howard, don't you think Villars the most enchanting creature in the world?—I vow I never beheld so handsome a fellow—Speak, Howard, now, don't you really think him so?"

"My humble situation, my Lady," said she, smiling, "keeps me on my guard, and preserves me from the enchantments of those so much above me."

"Well, but—phoo!—nonsense!—Do you think him handsome, Howard, is what I ask you?"

"I have seen as handsome," said she, with a sigh, "but Lord Villars has certainly altogether a fine noble form—His mental qualifications, too, render him very admirable.—His generosity, benevolence,

14 THE MUTABILITY OF

volence, and humanity, deserve to be more copied in the great world!" (there was applause enough to make me vain, Charles).

"Well said, Howard, you have made it out somehow: are you heart-whole, my dear girl?"

"Truly so as to Lord Villars, my Lady."

"In troth, Howard, I don't think you would refuse him, was he to offer: could you say nay to his captivating address?"

"Oh! with great ease, my Lady.— You frequently tell me I have singular ideas, therefore I shall not much surprise you when I affirm that I don't think

think his Lordship at liberty to address any lady."

I started, Duncan, as much as Lady Di Horton.

"Lard! Howard," said her Ladyship, "I vow you do surprise me—Why who retains his liberty?"

"Lady Villars."

"Ah! but, child, you know they are divorced."

"They are separated by human laws; but, according to my opinion, not by divine."

"How so?"

"First,

“ First, my Lady, on account of the solemn oath they are bound by at the altar, when they become man and wife, which expressly says “ *as long as they both shall live;*” and, again, “ *till death doth them part;*” with other sentences your Ladyship could not be a stranger to, when you passed thro’ the ceremony with Mr. Horton. There are many places likewise in Scripture—the New Testament I mean—which mentions the unlawfulness of marrying a divorced person; therefore it is in my calendar of crimes, my Lady, and I view it in the light of adultery.”

“ Ha! ha! ha! Why, Howard, thou art so given to the Gospel, it is a great misfortune to the world thou wert not of the other sex—What an excellent preacher thou wouldst have made!”

“ I knew

"I knew your Ladyship's mirth would be excited by my declaration, but it is actually my faith," said she, with firmness.

"Oh! I believe you, Howard, without that serious face, for I verily think you are a good *Christian*; but you must allow me to confess my faith fashionable, and that I should not make the least scruple of marrying his Lordship."

"Certainly, my Lady; I don't pretend to bias other peoples opinions."

The subject then dropped, Charles, and I proceeded on my walk. I have debated since that in my own mind what my charming Silena alleged against my marrying, and own to thee I almost think her right. Oh! I repeat to thee
again,

again, Duncan, I adore her more than ever, and am wretched. Adieu!

Yours, &c.

VILLARS.

Lady DI HORTON to Madame ST. CLARE.

Sbenkin-Hall.

DID I promise thee, St. Clare?—Yes, I did! Well, I vow, I can't tell how to begin a description of these people, except I can recollect their uncommonly simple conversation. Imagine them, like all inhabitants of country-towns, fond of cards and scandal——No—that will not do.——Well, to please thee, who lovest novelty, and mortify myself by a recital, here it comes.

To

To begin, then; these creatures are like a parcel of frightful owls, under the denomination of old maids and widows: I don't make oath, though, they are intitled to the former appellation. We were received by Mrs. Cadwallader with a hearty welcome; for, to do the insensibles of this country justice, hospitality is one of their greatest virtues, St. Clare.

“ Got pless me! Miss Shenkin come at last!—Inteed, I thought you had quite forsaken us. Well—and how does Mr. Shenkin and Mrs. Shenkin, and Mrs. Notable, your housekeeper—upon my word”——

“ This is Lady Di Horton, Mrs. Cadwallader.”

“ Oh!

“ Oh ! Got pless me, I am very proud to see your Ladyship—Pray be seated—What shall I offer to your Ladyship after your journey ?”

The good woman then made offers of every thing her house afforded, till I was weary of answering her. At last, however, we surmounted it, and sat down.

“ Your mamma has a very valuable servant, inteed, in Mrs. Notable ; tho’, to be sure, she is so good a manager herself, that she does not stand in need of her. Mrs. Jones is going to part with her servants, and Mrs. Williams with her cook and house-maid : then Mr. Davies, again, is going to make a thorough change—Got pless me ! they have a deal of trouble—I pity them. Oh la ! I thought I had some news to tell you—
Well !

Well! What do you think, Miss Shenkin?—*What for Miss Davis, of —, who is going to be married to Mr. Jones, of — dee, with his three children—Got pless me! how can the girl be so foolish as to think of him?—But they say it will certainly be so—Then Mr. Powel, of —, rode very hard through here yesterday with his servant—'Tis thought his uncle is dying, or he is going to offer himself to Miss Taffy—To be sure it would be a good match—They say for certain one of these things must be the consequence of his travelling in such haste—You know he must have some reason, and that's very likely—It must be so!”

Art thou not surprized at my pa-

* A peculiar method of talking among gossips in Wales.

tience,

22 THE MUTABILITY OF

tience, St. Clare? I listened thus far, and burst out a-laughing at her definition of Mr. Powell's ride—These people presently prove there is no effect without a cause—But, smoothing my features, I apologized for my risibility.

The following day company came to tea, before the time rational creatures breakfast in London. I had set myself off a little, and they gazed, poor wretches, till they almost lost their eye-sight. The antiquities set themselves down to cards with great earnestness; but the younger sort seemed more willing to contemplate my dress; nay, ventured to question me on fashions. The old ones, being settled at cards, began with news:

“ Oh! dear Mrs. Lewis, was not you shocked to hear of the accident Mrs. Taffy met with?”

“ Oh! Lord, what?—Pray tell me, for I have not heard it.”

“ Got pless me, you have not! Why you know, poor woman, she is apt to take a little too much—you understand me—and so she tumbled down stairs, and broke her arm.”

“ Poor woman! Well, I hope it will make her refrain for the future.—Clubs is trumps.”

Then says another, “ Who are you talking of, ladies?”

“ Mrs. Taffy,” answered they.

“ Oh! I assure you, ladies, there is not a word of truth in it; for my husband had a letter from Mrs. Taffy just now on business—She is in perfect health.”

“ Well, I declare it’s a shocking thing people will invent such lies ! Mrs. —— told me Mr. —— told her, who had it from Mr. —— ; he had it from Miss ——, and she had it from Mr. O——, who had it from Mrs. E——.”

I believe she would have gone on till now, if they had not all exclaimed, “ Oh ! shocking lies !—scandalous indeed, whoever invented it !”

“ Well, ladies,” said another, with an air of authority, “ what do you think of Miss Morgan, who is with child by her father’s groom.”

“ Ah ! so they say. Abandoned creature ! to put up with so low a fellow ! I pity the poor father and mother much.”

“ You

“ You may suspend your compassion, ladies,” said Miss Shenkin ; “ for, ’pon honour, I can assure you it is a very great falsity, and the propagators of such scandal ought to be severely punished.”

“ Very true, Miss Shenkin,” said an old parson in company ; “ people too seldom consider the evil consequence of slander, and I must make a very rough compliment, which is, you ladies in general are too apt to indulge yourselves in it, your inclinations are prone that way, at least in this country ; I can’t pretend to speak of others, as I have not been much out of my native place. What does your Ladyship think ?”

“ Oh ! I vow, Doctor, I join sentiments with you as to the ill-consequence of slander in general. A man’s honour,

or a woman's reputation, is never safe with the devotees of the goddess Detraction, and what is a man without honour, or a woman without reputation? that is, in report; the victims of her wrath are in reality, perhaps, possessed of both, though obscured by malice. The murderers of reputation generally prove the most guilty."

My speech, St. Clare, established my reputation of wit with the old Doctor, and he was my humble servant for the whole evening. However, our reflections did not prevent their continuing such anecdotes the residue of that visit; which, 'pon honour, St. Clare, did not surprize me, as I found it was the only conversation they were capable of joining in; they had no idea of any other. At last, a letter was produced from a young lady, that

that is to say, a maiden lady upwards of forty. She was allowed by them all to have a great fund of sense, which she exemplified in writing. That thou may'st be a judge whether she is or not, I made Shenkin get me a copy: it runs as follows, St. Clare:

"To Mrs. AP-RICE.

"My dear Mrs. Ap-Rice,

"ACCORDING to your desire I write, but inteed I have very little news to tell. I got to Milford in very goot time; who should I meet but Sally Davies behind Jack Thomas, and Pritchard attending them. They had passed me, as it was dark, before I minded who they were; however, I thought it should not go off so, therefore I called to Pritchard, and asked where they were going; he said

they talked of going to Bristol, but were to stop that night at Mr. Davies, of ——. Now I can't imagine what they are going to Bristol for. It is very odd of Miss Sally to travel so with Mr. Jack Thomas, and only a man-servant with her: I wish something mayn't come of it: but we shall see—(*you find, St. Clare, she consoles herself with hopes of mischief.*) —Then what for Mrs. Morgan, of ——; they say for certain Capt. Powel was seen one evening coming out of her bed-chamber. Poor Miss Jenny Jones, who is going to be married to ——, is to be pitied; I hope she won't have him. Then poor Mrs. Davies, of ——, is very bad, from a fright: one of the maids sweethearts, in the night, by mistake, came to her bed: he soon ran away when he found his mistake; but poor Mrs. Davies fell in violent fits. Two of Mr.

Ap-

Ap-Tudor's maids are with child, they say, by him. Lord, what doings! but the world must be peppeld. Our cows are sick too: Davy says that Rice knows very well they are bewitched by the old woman of the mountain. Now I can't tell what to think of it; but my mother says it may be true, for old Jane has a strange muttering way, and she recollects there was a great storm the night the hanimels were taken bad. She thought something unlucky would happen, as she spilled some salt, and broke a glass, that night too. Dear heart! I am very sorry I have so little news, but you must take the will for the deed, my dear Mrs. Ap-Rice, and so I remain

“Your affectionate humble servant,

“ALICE POWEL.”

30 THE MUTABILITY OF

Some passages in this mighty wise epistle were contradicted; however, the obligation they were under to the writer for news was the same. I suppose, St. Clare, thou art laughing at the fellow's mistake in going to the mistress's bed—Ha! ha! ha! 'pon honour, it was droll. But thou must know, among the commonalty, this is the land of liberty for love. The country girls and servants all receive adorations in bed at night, therefore it is no wonder an alteration of shape is so frequently the case. I suppose those in a higher sphere do the same, but conceal it better. Many of them who are prudes in public, and reflect so bitterly on female errors, I doubt not, act *per contra* in private: I always suspect a prude, St. Clare; they judge from their own hearts of others conduct.

Poor

Poor Howard was most severely handled by these old harridans: some said she was a cast-off mistress; others that she was a tripe-man's daughter, and had been seen at her father's shop at Wapping; with numerous other ridiculous suppositions.

But I am most heartily weary of this preamble, and not in excellent spirits.—Villars is not so coming as I wish; but I will leave no means unemployed to gain his heart. Adieu! St. Clare.

Thine assuredly,

DIANA HORTON.

Miss HOWARD to Miss MEYNEL.

Elysium-Place.

LADY Di Horton affects the *bon ton* much. She does me the honour to give me much of her company, my dear Harriot; but I can with ease perceive her friendship for me proceeds from her design on Lord Villars's heart. Mr. Villars rallies him on the conquest, while I take the liberty gently to chide my benefactor for endeavouring to make his nephew vain.

Lady Di, in her lively manner, sets this country in a strange light. She passed a few days with her friend Miss Shenkin at a small town not far from hence, called ———: the ladies of that place underwent her severest satire; tho' Mr. Villars

Villars allows there is great room for it. I endeavoured to vindicate them, by alleging that those her Ladyship had seen perhaps were always confined to their own country, and so had no opportunity of improving their manners or enlarging their ideas of things, which extended no further than to copy what they saw or heard.

Her lively Ladyship laughed exceedingly at my compassion for the poor wretches, as she termed them, and granted their ideas were very limited indeed, wholly dedicated to scandal; which occasioned many to attend prayers for the sake at the same time of hearing anecdotes of their neighbours.

It was to no purpose to contend with her Ladyship. The people that are in-

C 5 habitants

34 THE MUTABILITY OF

habitants of that place, it seems, are famed for the above vice, and pass judgment on the reputation of every person in the country: but here are numbers of very amiable ladies who have never quitted the principality. Now, indeed, most young ladies are sent to England for education; though I think it is very unnecessary, if they are to pass their lives in Wales, as it gives them rather a distaste to their own country.

I am glad to hear your cousin is arrived in England, and hope he will not long be the means of detaining you from your friends at London, my dear Harriot, as you wish to be there. I frequently hear from my kind friend Mrs. Gordon, whom I shall ever gratefully preserve in my memory. She has returned me your letters.—Ah! Harriot,
the

the Marquis—but you have heard it, perhaps—is at London with Violetta, who has usurped my title and——The subject is too affecting; I must drop it.



Finding my spirits much depressed, my dear friend, I took a walk to Shenkin-Hall: Mr. Villars and his nephew attended me. There I was in hopes of having them raised by Lady Di; but, alas! she unknowingly added to my pain. By way of diverting Lord Villars, she read aloud some sentences of a letter she had just received from an intimate friend: one was that my perfidious Melville and his lady had been introduced at Court. Think what a trial the hearing such news, with their remarks on it, was to my afflicted heart. Lord Villars said “there was something very singular in the Mar-

quis's affair with Miss Belmont; it was surprizing a young lady of her birth, fine accomplishments, and apparent modesty, should act so.—He had heard her very favourably reported of—Many thought her innocent as to the affair of Count St. Lou—It was very surprizing altogether—There seemed a mystery in it certainly.”

Lady Di assured him “ Miss Belmont was guilty; that she had it from good authority; but that she sincerely pitied her, on account of her family; they had acted very cruel in surrendering her up to poverty and infamy.—Now, indeed, nobody knew where she was, but imagined at France, as Count de St. Lou was gone there after her.”

Little did any of them imagine the
unhappy

unhappy object was before them. My palpitation was so great I could scarce conceal it, and was ready to faint; but, having a hat on, and fortunately being by a window, which I leaned out of, I escaped their notice.

Lady Di and Miss Shenkin returned with us to dinner. As we were sitting down to table, a cold sweat seized me, with a faintness, which obliged me to retire to the next room. Lord Villars, finding I stopped there, came to me: I waved my hand for him to return, and take no notice, but he exclaimed, "Good God! my dear, my lovely Miss Howard, what is the matter?" applying some drops as he spoke—"You are very ill—let me call for help."

I grew better in a few minutes, and
desired

38 THE MUTABILITY OF

desired him to return, telling him I would soon follow; but I could not persuade him to leave me, therefore returned to the room with him. He informed them he had found me not well. Mr. Villars kindly excused my sitting at table, and his Lordship handed me some hartshorn-jelly from the desert. They luckily attributed my illness to walking so much, the day being warm.

Lady Di rather spitefully rallied me on his Lordship's singular attention and anxiety. I answered her Ladyship seriously, that she was unacquainted with his humanity, whence alone it proceeded.

Lord Villars offering to attend them home in the coach, Lady Di said peevishly, "No, no, we won't deprive your
Lordship

Lordship of your new employment, for Howard will want her nurse."

Instead of renewing his offer he gave her a look of contempt, and suffered his uncle to hand her to the carriage.

After she was gone, he seemed in a reverie, out of which I drew him by saying Lady Di gave her wit full scope, without meaning to offend; that, for my part, I forgave her, and hoped he would do the same.

"Ah! Miss Howard," returned he, "your heavenly disposition is well known to me: I can easily forgive her as to myself, but I can't bear she should treat you with insolence; I always suffer more for my friends than myself."

Mr.

40 THE MUTABILITY OF

Mr. Villars entered smiling. "Well, nephew, can you bear existence under the displeasure of Lady Di? Miss Howard, I shall be very angry with you, in turn, if you derogate from the opinion I have held of you, and endeavour to inveigle Lord Villars."

"Ah! be assured, my worthy, kind benefactor," returned I, "that I would sooner die than be guilty of such treachery, had I beauty to encourage me to attempt it. I hope you have a better opinion of me."

"You don't vindicate yourself, Harry?" said he in raillery.

"There is no occasion, my dear uncle. I am certain you will never alter your opinion of Miss Howard, or myself,
from

from any thing her Ladyship may insinuate, or I would quit the place immediately, sooner than so worthy an object should be deprived of your protection."

Mr. Villars, with tears of pleasure in his eyes, said, "I am not sorry, my dear Villars, Lady Di has displayed her folly, since she has been the means of your uttering such sentiments; and I am sure Silena forgives her."

To continue in the friendship of those we esteem is very pleasing. I forgot my affliction, and soon recovered.

The night is far advanced, and Cynthia with her pallid rays has silvered o'er the ocean. How beautiful does the distant scene appear! The silence that reigns creates a solemnity in the imagination.

A star

42 THE MUTABILITY OF

A star darting from its orbit reminds one of immortality, when the spark divine which animates us shoots from a weight of oppression to peace, tranquility, and joy. But, adieu! tired Nature requires repose; it is in vain to contend against it: life cannot be continued without refreshment by sleep, and how like groveling insects are most of our lives spent!

SILENA HOWARD.

Lady DI HORTON to Madame ST. CLARE.

Elysium-Place.

CONFUSION seize her! May the small-pox make her horrible to view, and her temper more sower than a neglected old maid! May all the plagues that can befall woman attend her, till she awaken my pity, and that will not be while I exist!

exist! Shall such a stupid, inanimate thing as Howard rival Lady Di Horton? Oh! let it not be said, St. Clare; the idea drives me to distraction—A wretch unworthy notice, that I extended the favour of my seeming friendship to; and truly, because she was singled out by a woman of fashion, she must take it into her head to attempt being a fine lady—could not possibly undergo a short walk without immense fatigue—must be fainting, in order to have Villars press her hand, and sigh over her. Oh, revenge! revenge! come with thy dire train, and gratify my vengeance on her! Assist me, dear St. Clare, for passion overclouds my genius. So sudden and unexpected a discovery of Villars' passion for Howard made it difficult for me to rein-in the tempest of my soul, and I said some things, St. Clare, I now wish unsaid:
but

44 THE MUTABILITY OF

but dissimulation and art shall be my guides for the future; my words shall be as oil or honey, while I prepare a storm shall overwhelm her. As for that angel Villars, whom I detest myself for still adoring, I must endeavour to get into his favour again, which will I suppose take time to accomplish, for I put the dear creature out of humour with me by calling him Howard's nurse. To be sure, he deserved it. But, adieu! St. Clare, I must not waste my time in writing, but in meditating mischief on the devoted Silena. Assist, with thy advice, thy faithful friend

DIANA HOWARD.

Miss

Miss MEYNEL to Miss HOWARD.

Dublin.

A Fortunate planet presides over me at this juncture: Silena, pray Heaven it may continue its influence till I arrive safe at London. Yes, my dear girl, joy to my soul! I am recalled from banishment, thanks to the sickly state of poor cousin's heart. It seems he has fallen in love with some Donna or Signora abroad, therefore Lord and Lady Lorton judge that my weaker charms may make their appearance, and prattle sometimes rouze him from his sighing reveries; for their darling, according to the intelligence we have received, sighs bitterly—walks with his arms folded in each other—shakes his head at feeling a void where there should be a heart—and is guilty of all
the

46 THE MUTABILITY OF

the distractions which unhappy lovers fall into. Now I am from my very soul sorry both for him and them: you know I have not a flinty heart; but I am sure I shall laugh at his dumb show. I am quite charmed with your friend Villars; if he had not offered to settle you with two other lovers, I should have nominated him a little bit more than friend; for there are few men, if any, Silena, that are fond of your Platonic schemes. Don't be angry; to speak as I think is my motto.—Tho' I am partial to lively beings, I have not patience with Lady Di, because she is of a malevolent cast. Cheerfulness and innocence ever should be joined, says your most affectionate

HARRIOT MEYNEL.

Lord

Lord VILLARS to Lord DUNCAN.

Elysium-Place.

I AM amazed at my own stupidity, Charles, in having been so long exploring what might easily have occurred long since, and what all circumstances combine together to prove past a doubt, which is, that the lovely Howard is in reality the unfortunate Marchioness of Melville. Re-peruse some of my former letters—observe her fear of being known, and her owning an irrevocable engagement; to which add my having just now learnt that Miss Belmont is niece to Lady N——, (which particulars correspond well with such a supposition), and I think you will coincide with me in a firm persuasion of it. Lovely, angelic creature! Uncommon misfortunes,
indeed,

48 THE MUTABILITY OF

indeed, she has experienced; no wonder she lamented her fate so bitterly at Laurel-Grove, when just become a victim to such a plot of villainy. It is to me amazing that she has brought her mind to such composure as it appears at present to enjoy. What fortitude she must be mistress of to sink so calmly into a dependent state, and what barbarians must her relations be to suffer it! Where is the reason in supposing her guilty? Would an object so lovely, in the bloom of life, withdraw herself from admiration, and the man she was thought to intrigue with, if she was not innocent, Duncan? Oh! no, it is against all conclusions to imagine it. But, as she appeared so very unhappy when she thought I knew her, I will still appear ignorant, to save her pain, and tell no one but thee, Charles, of it. Oh! that I had power
to

to restore the reputation and honour of her my soul adores! With what rapture would I fly to the extremity of the universe to compleat it! What a consummate villain must Melville be to take advantage of a private marriage, and use with cruelty so charming a creature! Oh! Charles, I cannot tell thee how my heart bleeds for her! how great my distress is at finding she can never be mine! and how unresolved and unwilling I am to leave this place!—I cannot quit it—What, forego all opportunities of gazing at her lovely form, and listening to her heavenly voice!—But, oh! my Duncan, I must leave her—it is criminal to stay adoring her as I do—another's wife! Love shall not overpower my principles of honour, which you swear I carry to a romantic height. I must depart—If there is a chance of conquering, absence

must effect it; for while I gaze, still deeper sinks the dart. However, you may write to me again before I leave Elysium-Place, and administer balm, if you can, Duncan, to the afflicted mind of your friend

VILLARS.

P. S. It would be to no purpose to impart my discovery to my uncle, as she would accept of nothing, I'm sure, independent of her attending Mrs. Villars.

Miss HOWARD to Miss MEYNEL.

Elysium-Place.

I HAVE been waiting two posts, my dearest Harriot, in hopes of hearing you were safe arrived in Berkeley-Square, and flatter myself that before I conclude
this

this epistle I shall not meet with a third disappointment. Your safety, my dearest friend, is now nearest my heart: a continuance of happiness and that vivacity which is interwoven in your disposition, and is admirable because it is joined with the best of hearts, is my constant wish.

Lady Di is so very condescending and humble to Lord Villars and myself since the behaviour I mentioned, that I know not what to make of it. His Lordship is very much altered too, and I think seems in the same situation you describe your cousin, though he conceals it before Mr. Villars, but when alone with me he scarce speaks. He writes often, and has received many letters lately. Indeed I should pity him much, if I knew he was unsuccessful in love, as I

52 THE MUTABILITY OF

think him deserving of happiness.—I wish he would confide in me, for speaking of the object of his affection might alleviate the pangs of absence a little.



At last, my dear friend, a letter from you is arrived, which has, as you judged, surprized me much. It has afforded me both pleasure and pain to find your cousin is the person who has left a tender impression on your heart ever since the masquerade—Pleasure to hear there is a mutual affection, and pain as I fear you have both much anxiety and trouble to undergo before you can arrive at the completion of your wishes. It is said women in general believe in fate, especially with respect to marriage; those who are predestinarians would not scruple to assert that a match will certainly take

take place between you and your cousin; for though Lord and Lady Lorton had been very careful to divide you, yet a frolic brought your cousin in secret with a friend to Dublin, where in disguise he became a captive to your charms—afterwards blinded his parents by a feigned passion, by which means you was brought to his desiring eyes again. Upon my word, Harriot, it forms a pretty story—I must rally you a little—yet I shall still be in pain for you. If you both act not with great discretion, you must infallibly be separated.—Be prudent and wise, my dearest friend.

Lady Di and Mrs. Villars have been exhausting their mirth on me; however, I had the gentlemen on my side. You must know they caught me reading the Lessons for the day. Her Ladyship ask-

ing me what I was poring over that old book for, I answered it was my constant custom.—She laughed immoderately.—They forced me down stairs with them, and Lady Di related my folly, as she termed it, to the gentlemen. I said, with a serious accent, that I never should be ashamed of doing what I ought, for I thought it a duty incumbent on every one, if they did not attend daily prayers at church: even then we were too forgetful of what Scripture contained; for if we would but guide ourselves by the inestimable rules therein laid before us, we should not have so many follies to answer for.

“Lard! child, what nonsense!” exclaimed her Ladyship.

“If it is nonsense, my Lady, weakness

ness is more pardonable than vice, and you are welcome to condemn me for my folly."

Lord Villars and his uncle agreed my arguments were just.

Mrs. Villars said, "To be sure, as Howard says, you know there is no harm in it—Is there, Mr. Villars?—Ha! ha! ha!"

Lady Di, finding herself not supported in her ill-timed mirth, though she did not seem satisfied, desisted from further raillery.

Ah! my dear Harriot, it is for want of a more frequent perusal of Holy Writ that our modern fine ladies so often err. They allege, when they are willing to

excuse their neglect, that time is wanting. They should blush still more at that excuse, when so much of their time is dedicated to pleasure and folly, and they will not allow one half-hour to reflect on a future state, and improve those morals which Pleasure so vitiates. Devoted to that alluring Goddess, their eager pursuit of her encreases, till, unhappily plunged into vices, at first little thought of, all morality quits them, and they avoid reflection, and are lost.

My ever-dear parents (hail to their revered memory!) early taught me the custom I still observe, and a confidence in God; whereby I have been enabled to undergo, with I hope tolerable resignation, the misfortunes which have befallen me: and the comfort I have frequently experienced from passages of
Scripture

Scripture convinced me of the utility and profitableness of my practice.

Reading and music divide most of our time, especially on evenings when free from company. Lord Villars says he shall leave this place with regret, as he never spent his time so much to his satisfaction; which I can perceive affords Mr. Villars no small pleasure.

Inform me of your procedures, my dear Harriot.

Yours affectionately,

SILENA HOWARD.

Lord VILLARS to Lord DUNCAN.

Elysium-Place.

YOUR history surprized me much, Charles: by the account you give of your cousin, she is worthy of your regard. May you both enjoy many years of happiness together! for I make no doubt of Lord and Lady Lorton's bestowing felicity on their only son; they never will deny him the woman of his choice, especially so near a relation. You are too timid, Duncan, and let your fears counterbalance all probability. Oh! that the adorable Silena was so near my hopes!—But I, alas, am cut off for ever!

My uncle insists upon my making a longer stay. I have consented, Charles.

It

It is with readiness we comply with what coincides with our wishes. But I must inform thee of a short conversation that I have just had with the charmer of my soul.

It happened, that I was sitting alone, so absorbed in my own melancholy ideas that I continued silent some time, and perhaps I might give vent to sighs unknown to myself. She awaked me from this situation by her ever-enchancing voice: "Mr. Villars informs me," said she gracefully, "it was with difficulty he persuaded your Lordship to prolong your stay here: I am sure if he thought compliance to his wishes afforded you pain, he would be far from desiring it. Your thoughtfulness of late makes me think your inclination is elsewhere: excuse the liberty I take with your Lord-

ship; but, indeed, if you place confidence in Mr. Villars, it would alleviate that uneasiness of mind which seems to have taken possession of you."

"It would only afford him a participation of my anxiety," answered I, "without his being able to alleviate it in the least, my dear Miss Howard; for which reason I chuse to remain silent."

"Your Lordship is the best judge," said she, modestly bowing her head; "I sincerely wish you happiness."

"Amiable Miss Howard!—I wish it was in your power to bestow it—But you cannot—and, spite of your indulgence, I must be wretched," said I, with a sigh.

"Wretched!" returned she, growing pale.

"Yes, Miss Howard, wretched!—
Can you think—But I must be silent."

"My Lord!" exclaimed she, with a look of the greatest consternation, pity, and, I may almost say, tenderness. Oh! Duncan, perhaps vanity may be now too predominant, but I think—yes, I am certain—she does not hate me.

We both remained silent. My eyes spoke sentiments which my heart condemned them for, without being able to repel them. In this critical juncture Mrs. Villars entered, and I retired to write to thee.

If I should find reason to flatter myself, that Miss Howard would return my love, were it not for the principles by which she is actuated, it would only
add

add to my pain: on the other hand, was she a person of looser sentiments, my regard for her would cease; since, though her beauty attracts my admiration, it is her virtue rivets my affection.

I know not how to depart from this place, nor how to stay in it, torn as I am by contending passions. Ten thousand Platonic schemes arise, which reason discountenances. She is another's wife!—Ah! there lies the horrid reflection.—I must fly—it is only by flight I can preserve propriety, and avoid betraying how very dear she is to me. My will is to act as a man of honour, but—Oh! Charles, I am bewildered.

Clandon and Clairville, who have been absent on a visit some time, are just returned. Poor Clairville! how I pity him!

him! His disappointment visibly hurts him.

A certain work* I have been lately perusing, exalts instinct above reason; which notion, commonly adopted, would soon indeed level us with brutes. The author says it should be "the immediately impelling principle of action." Now, it is certain, by obeying this impelling principle, and discarding reason, many enormous crimes have been committed; which is a strong proof that instinct should not be our guide but when accompanied by reason.

Was I to follow the impulse of instinct, I should immediately fly to the

* A Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with those of the Brute Creation. By Dr. —.

arms

64 THE MUTABILITY OF

arms of my adorable Silena; but reason checks that impulse, and tells me I should err. Oh! Duncan, a month since you experienced the torments of a hopeless passion, therefore know how to ~~pity~~ the unfortunate

VILLARS,

Lady DI HORTON to Madame ST. CLARE.

Sbenkin-Hall.

WHEN last I wrote, St. Clare, my bosom was similar to the tremendous ocean, whose foaming billows when enraged would fain dash against the atmosphere. I imprecated every thing around me—upbraided Heaven itself—and, to conceal my tempest from observing eyes, was tortured past description. For some days I plotted, contrived,

trived, resolved, and unresolved, unnumbered plans. My intention was to make Clandon a co-partner, but he was absent then. At last I soothed Silena and that charming fellow Villars admirably. Joy to my heart, St. Clare, I now have no need of forcing him to love me—The business is done—He comes here frequently without the family, and yesterday called me his dear Lady Di—Oh! how my heart rebounded, and joy sparkled in my eyes! I have attentively viewed his behaviour to Howard; he speaks to her as usual, but I really believe, St. Clare, what the girl said was true, “Compassion only excited his attention to her” the day I was distracted with jealousy. She is a poor, unmeaning, enthusiastic creature; how could I ever fear her!

I now

66 THE MUTABILITY OF

I now give a loose to my mirth on the folly and stupidity of the objects around. Mrs. Shenkin is the premier. Yesterday she introduced me to a cousin of the seventh generation. There were another two whose great-great-grandfathers were first-cousins. Poor woman! her standard for a man of sense is, that he understands genealogy better than any man in the country.

Then a Mrs. Fluellen (a neighbour, who is reckoned an artful woman in the line of intelligence) comes in, St. Clare, shrugging her shoulders as if she had virtues to reform the age, and in a solemn tone, and with an artful leer of her eyes (which upon these occasions she turns to the very corners), cries, "Well! I have been at Mrs. A—'s, and having heard, you know, about her niece, I hinted at
the

the imprudence of the young women of these days—what a sad thing it was they turned so gay, and so forth. At last she said her niece was well at Mr. W——’s, and she was surprized people took liberties by mentioning her name in a way they should not: upon which, you know, (shrugging up her shoulders) I said, Ah! the world would often blaze false reports.—You know it was no business of mine, since she said nothing.—I wonder she can think people are stupid and blind—But I never say any thing when folks are so shy. Lord pless me! (lifting up her eyes) how can people act so imprudent!”

Now, you must know, St. Clare, this bit of scandal was all a falsity. These old devils, who have been intriguing in their younger days, with their hypocritical

68 THE MUTABILITY OF

tical sanctification, won't let the real virtuous alone, or maintain the character they merit; which I vow, St. Clare, is a great hardship.

She was talking of the frailty of a young couple the other day, when, to provoke her, I asked, If envying their joys made her publish them? though perhaps she had bestowed intimacies the parties themselves were unacquainted with.

She coloured. "Indeed, my Lady, (drawing up her head) I repeat only what I am told."

Howard was present. "Aye, but, Mrs. Fluellen, we should not always believe what we are told, if it is to the prejudice of the party," said Mrs. Piety.
"Ah!

“ Ah! Miss, young people are apt to be incredulous, because they are unacquainted with the wickedness of the world: when you have lived longer, and are older, you will know better.”

“ I hope not,” returned Piety; “ I should be sorry to increase in gloom and dislike to my fellow-creatures: if we have an ill opinion of the world in general, we never can be tolerably easy while in it. I would never have a woman accused of a deviation from virtue, till there are very convincing proofs of it; a blasted character is hard to be retrieved.”

“ Aye, Miss, but you are young—you will know better.—Aye, aye,” returned Wisdom again.

In

In the midst of this edifying confab. enters a 'squire or two half drunk ;
 " Zounds ! you women are always talking scandal ; can't you let the poor girls alone to follow *instinct* * ? Nature points it out to them—D—n it, I'll lay a bottle of claret, three parts out of four you have been saying are abominable lyes.—My head aches confoundedly—How many quarts of ale do you think I drank last night ?—Eight, faith—But Dick was drunk in a trice.—I'm d—n'd dry—do order me some negus, my dear Mrs. Shenkin."

" Lord !" said Mrs. Fluellen, " what an unquenchable thirst you men have !—Ough !—Fie upon you !—But for women to drink, Oh ! it is abominable."

* The brutal part of mankind adopt Dr. ——'s principle.

There

There is Miss O—— drinks four glassess of wine sometimes after supper—Oh! shocking!” (shrugging up her shoulders.)

“ Dear Mrs. Fluellen, don’t set me down for a beastly creature—but, ’pon honour, I can drink five when I am *à la mort*, and go free from elevation to bed,” said I.

“ Lord! Lady Di, your Ladyship jokes.”

“ Zounds! what a pother you make!” said the ’squire; “ why, Mrs. Fluellen, I’ll lay odds in your favour, for I’ll be —— if I don’t think you a hypocrite.”

“ I don’t know,” said she, colouring,
 “ what should give you such an opinion
 of

72 THE MUTABILITY OF

of me. Cot pless me!—I drink!—
O———h!”

The oh! she gave was almost an hour long, St. Clare; and the gentlemen gave such hideous yells of laughter, that I was absolutely obliged to stop my ears.

“Got pless me!” (an expression much in use in this country) said Mrs. Shenkin, “you wrong Mrs. Fluellen, for I never can get her to drink one glass, she is so abstemious.”

“Ah! Cot forbid I should be otherwise.—No, no; it’s a sign he does not know me.”

“Well, zounds! to make it up, old genius, I’ll tell thee news: One of my best hounds died this morning; and another

ther thing is, Mrs. Toby is at last going to be married to the old parson."

"Well, really you surprize me!"

"Nay, don't mourn for poor Rover, we shall all follow."

"Aye, aye, but Mrs. Toby going to be married—Got pless me!"

"Nay, wonders will never cease," said he, "for—what was it I was going to say——Oh—ay—humph!"——

"Got pless me, what, Mr. Morgan?"

"Why, that you are going to be married to John Jones, Lord Gwyn's steward."

"Lord pless me, how can people talk so scandalously of one—Surely they dare not say such a thing of me!"

"Of you!" Zounds! why should you escape? you won't let others alone."

"Got pless me! O——h!" said she, with a shrug and quakerish groan of the spirit, quitting the room.

Morgan set up what with justice may be termed a horse-laugh. "Wounds!" said he, "I thought I would give the old gossip a rebound.—Now for a glass of brandy, and we'll away to Price's, where we are to dine. Come, Dick."

Dick was of a bashful disposition, St. Clare, and could only laugh, and say "Yes" or "No." But, adieu! there's enough

enough of country conversation, which differs as much from that of the polite world as the sun in its most transcendent glory from a candle in a turnip; there is a Welch simile for you.

As for old Shenkin, his forte lies in forcing bumpers down the throats of his male visitants; and he is what is here termed an honest fellow, because he swallows half-pints without being suffocated. Here is plenty of such honest fellows; if thou art for one, St. Clare, doubt not of a good recommendation from thy most sincere friend

DI HORTON.

From the Same to the Same.

Sbenkin-Hall.

'PON honour, St. Clare, this dame Fluellen is an original. She would form an admirable character, was she but known to our modern Aristophanes. She absolutely affords me much diversion, and is continually here; so I am not at a loss for amusement. Fortunately she is not acquainted with the fabulous history of gods and goddesses, or I vow, St. Clare, I firmly believe she would fancy herself Minerva, so excellent an opinion has she of her own wisdom and sagacity. But novels, child, and pretty love-scenes, which are light reading, she doats on—They suit her taste—She feasts on them in private—"They shew the way of life so, and are so edifying!"——
 "Edifying!"

“Edifying!” St. Clare: ha! ha! inflaming the passions of a woman of seventy-four. Edifying!—Ha! ha! ha! She’s droll, ’pon honour. Then she enters into the spirit of them, and bemoans the fate of the heroine, who is undoubtedly a prodigy of *virtue*; crying, with a sigh, “Poor thing, she went through a great deal: it’s very natural, is’n’t it, Lady Di?” “Oh, yes, very instructive.” I mean, St. Clare, in the art of love, they shew young ladies how to proceed with their lovers. Then to it she sits again with more eagerness than many a girl of fifteen, and treble the attention she bestows on her prayers.

I absolutely think, St. Clare, Nature designed this hag for a tutorefs, for she idolizes the power of commanding. If any one is going out at a door the same

time as herself, she says, with a spiteful authoritative leer and half whisper, (pushing them at the same time as a hind would a pig out of a sty,) Go!—go along!—as if no one knew how to walk without bidding but herself. I turned short round the other day, and in a childish tone said, “May I go now, Madam?” She was rather confused, but “the leopard cannot change its spots.” Then at breakfast she tells Miss Shenkin to take the napkin on her lap—to sit nearer the table—and “take care, Miss Shenkin, you had better cut that toast in two, you will find it handier to put to your mouth.” Absolutely fact, St. Clare. Upon which Shenkin, who is a good-natured creature, bursts out laughing, and tells her she was taught all that twenty years ago. “Oh, I only spoke, because I thought you would grease

grease yourself," says Wisdom, tossing her head. Her manner of speaking makes it so laughable and ridiculous, together with her little eyes, which are turned to the corners in a manner prostitutes seek for prey, and are continually emitting spleen. She is frequently talking of days of yore, when she was at London, what was going forward among people of fashion—how careful Lord and Lady Columbus, whom she was with, were of her—She never walked the streets alone, not she, such care was taken of her; and she went here, and she went there—At last, St. Clare, 'pon honour, Mrs. Shenkin told me, as a secret, Fluellen had been Abigail to Lady Columbus. Ridiculous fool, to boast so. As my stay here will not be long, I will not lose diversion, by offending her, in contradicting her own report of great-

80 THE MUTABILITY OF

ness. Let the wretch boast on. Every now and then she is in a fit of feigned grief, which some widows are liable to—bemoaning the loss of her friend, her dear friend—Oh! she can never be happy—She suffered, ah! she suffered what no one ever did—Oh! her dear friend, she could have wished to have died with him. For some time I thought it was an old lover, and asked her who he was, what was his name? “Oh! my dear Mr. Fluellen, to be sure; do you think I could lament the loss of any body else so?—No, God knows.” Now, really, St Clare, I think she has been a woman of intrigue, from that very circumstance of bestowing the title of *friend* so lavishly on her husband, as if she was ashamed of the latter appellation. A male friend conveys an extensive idea, generally made use of by mistresses, but seldom
by

by wives. When she takes it into her head to be sorrowful, she commends herself exceedingly for her attention to him in his last moments, as if no woman but herself ever bore affection to a husband, and yielded him all the comfort he was capable of at that period. Her manner made me doubt the truth of her assertion. Upon enquiry, I found that she had spent very little time with him, and what she had he thought too much, as she had given him sufficient cause to dislike her before his last sickness.—The very sight of her was hateful to him, poor man! She is really a genius in hypocrisy, St. Clare, and a delightful retailer of news, therefore fit to live in this country. There is not a day passes but she brings information of maids being with child, or marriages of her own inventing, somebody's mortality, or goats

breaking their necks by falls from the mountains; so that you may imagine she keeps us in continual amaze. What a delightful companion in the country! Then we have charming diversion with Morgan and her, for the 'squire has taken it into his head to contradict and torment her, which sets her a-grinning and leering, for she always does so when angry; a sure sign of malevolence within, St. Clare. Yesterday Shenkin and myself found it impossible to conceal our risibility at a scene that passed between them. Mrs. Fluellen came first, and related several anecdotes while we sat at work: after which Morgan entered, and informed us he had just parted with old Mrs. Jones, who desired her compliments to us.

“ Oh,” says Fluellen, “ Mrs. Jones,
of

of ——" (nodding her head at us by way of rebuke to him for saying *old*.)

"Why, zounds," said he, "she's as old as you; and it's time to call her so, that she may be distinguished from her daughter-in-law."

"O Lord! aye, aye; as to myself, I acknowledge myself old, but it's vulgar to distinguish ladies in that manner.—Aye, aye, as to myself, God knows, I'm old enough—Yes, I'm *old*," leering at us.

"'Sblood," said he, "do you set up for a reformer of manners? What a pother you make about old-age: by G—d I believe you have a willing inclination to be young, which makes you so envious, and given to scandal; but I must tell

24 THE MUTABILITY OF

you, old Duchess, that you shall not have me in your list of victims without smarting for it—Zounds, Madam, I'll prosecute you for scandal."

"I defy you!—I defy you!" said she, grinning, and edging on her seat.

"D—mn your grins and your defiance," said he, still more provoked at her. "How dare you say I have designs on my friend Jack Green's wife—that she suffers me to take liberties, and if Jack died I should marry her? Zounds, Madam, it's an insult on my honour to suppose I would attempt debauching my friend's wife, and a blast on her virtue which time may never retrieve, besides the ill consequence attending its coming to her husband's ears, if he was not well convinced of my integrity, and acquaint-
ed

ed with the author of the vile detraction."

He happened to be sober, St. Clare, which made him talk so well; but while haranguing took a glass or two of wine from the side-board.

She all the time held her fore-finger up to his face, and grinning uttered, with the most malicious countenance ever seen, "I defy you!—I defy you!"

Shenkin and I burst out a-laughing, and Howard, who had entered in the beginning of the fray, exclaimed, "Good God!" with a sort of horror.

"Zounds, the woman's mad," returned Morgan. "Defy me! Will you defy the law? for, since you provoke
me,

86 THE MUTABILITY OF

me, I'll prosecute you, by ——. Mrs. Davies says she is willing to make oath you told her every syllable I have now mentioned."

Fluellen changed colour when he named his author, but still teased him with her favourite words.

Howard sat as if upon thorns, but continued silent.

Fluellen's irritating manner provoked Morgan exceedingly. "Sblood, you old harridan, you may defy your friend the devil, if you will," said he, "but I'll make you for the future not so fond of retailing made news." So saying, he bowed to us, and retired.

She retained the same words till he departed,

departed, St. Clare, and then burst into a loud hollow laugh.

I was resolved not to let it drop so, therefore began with "Well, Mrs. Fluellen, what will you do?"

"Ha! ha! ha! I defy him, my Lady."

"Ah, but my dear Mrs. Fluellen, if you said what he asserted, 'pon honour he may give you a little trouble."

"Well, never mind, my Lady—I scorn him: aye, aye, he can do me no harm." So saying, she took herself away laughing, and we have not seen her since.

Howard sat in amaze at her, and
seemed

88 THE MUTABILITY OF

seemed shocked to meet with such a character in life.

My sweet Villars then entered with more company, and another conversation ensued. Villars is very attentive to me, and I am happy. Oh, I forgot to tell thee, St. Clare, that Lord Clandon has made proposals for Shenkin (or rather her fortune, which he stands much in need of): the old folks are mightily pleased at it, and Shenkin is quite elevated with the idea of being a Lady, but still flirts with all that comes in her way.

Clandon's design on Howard seems not extinct, but what scheme he has in train I know not. Clairville sighs like a forlorn lover, and tells me he intends leaving this country with Lord Clandon,

as

as he cannot prevail on the charming Miss Howard to listen to him. Thus is the world here situated, St. Clare.

I am quite tired with scribbling, therefore for the present adieu !

Thine sincerely,

DI HORTON.

Miss HOWARD to Miss MEYNEL.

Elysium-Place.

I AM extremely depressed in spirits, my dear Harriot, from an incident that has happened in this neighbourhood, which must hurt every feeling mind. What evils spring from Detraction ! Most of the ladies of this country are votaries to that goddess, and continually bow to her sway. They affect piety, and repeat
holy

90 THE MUTABILITY OF

holy ejaculations, at the very time they are offending the Deity, by slandering their neighbours, and depriving them of reputation, happiness, nay, almost life. It is a serious and melancholy consideration, and the divines here should frequently expose this vice, with all its horrid consequences.

But let me inform you, my dear friend, of the cause of this serious reflection. There often visits at Mrs. Shenkin's an old lady, named Mrs. Fluellen, who is esteemed a happy retailer of news, and has cunning to fathom secrets. From this quality she is called a sensible, artful woman. Lady Di has drawn a droll caricatura of her, with the following motto:

“ 'Tis secret truths I fathom with my eyes,
And guilt unknown to others I surmise.”

I must

I must confess, Harriot, she had something in her manner that at the first interview gave me a disgust to her; and, without being skilled in physiognomy, I soon read her character. She is overbearing in company, from her fancied superior wisdom, tho' at the same time she will shrug up her shoulders, and pretend to be very humble. Every now and then she broaches a French word, with I remember they used to say so when I was at London; giving herself numerous airs about her grandeur when she was there. Mr. Villars informed me, when I mentioned it, that she had been waiting-woman to some people of fashion. Now, no honest employment is to be despised; many gentlewomen of good families have been reduced to it, and treated with respect in their places; but it is a very great folly for people to
affect

affect to be greater than they are. Had she been silent, we, perhaps, should have been ignorant of her servitude. For some years she has been in this country, fully employed in reciting news, and frequently inventing it.

In this neighbourhood likewise reside a couple who were happy. Mr. Green is a very agreeable man, but, like his countrymen, rather too fond of his bottle. Mrs. Green is a very amiable, sensible young woman, of an extreme delicate constitution, and remarkably fond of her husband. Her sister, Miss Smith, resides with them. This Mr. Green had a very intimate friend, named Morgan, from whom he was scarce a day divided. Out of affection to her husband, Mrs. Green paid all possible attention to his friend, which Mr. Green seemed much pleased

pleased with, till Mrs. Fluellen, like a malevolent fiend, came and blasted all their joys. She formed ideas of her own what might be, and then went and imparted them to Mrs. Davies as facts, whose house she was just leaving when Mr. Green entered it. He said he had some private business with her, and desired he might go home with her. She complied, it seems. Mr. Green then told her he had just overheard her mention something about Morgan and his wife, and insisted upon knowing particulars. She hemmed, and laughed; then acknowledged she had heard that Mrs. Green and the 'squire were very friendly together, with some more hints, which drove the poor man almost distracted, though he concealed his perturbation of mind before her. The same day, just after this happened, I met her at Mr. Shenkin's,

Shenkin's, where was Mr. Morgan, threatening her, for daring to utter such scandal, which was the first I heard of it; and shall never as long as I breathe forget Mrs. Fluellen's diabolical countenance. She would have afforded an artist an excellent representation of Spleen. Her manner was irritating beyond description, and struck me with horror.

But let me return to Mr. Green.

Miss Smith says he was gloomy, sullen, and in an uncommon agitation, all day. Her sister was very unhappy, as she had never seen him in that way before. They silently retired to their respective chambers.

When Miss Smith came down in the morning, she saw Mr. Green on horse-back,

back, quitting the place, with a servant and portmanteau. Surprized exceedingly, she went to Mrs. Green's chamber, where she found the unhappy lady senseless on the floor. She immediately called assistance, and dispatched a servant for a physician. He arrived; and at last, by bleeding her, and forcing down medicines, restored her to her senses. She then informed her sister that Mr. Green had accused her of criminality with Mr. Morgan, and had vowed he would never more live with, or ever see her again; that she had wept and fainted, in turns, all night; and that, seeing him quit the place, her senses were again quite overpowered. The Doctor and Miss Smith endeavoured to comfort her, but in vain; she relapsed into fresh agonies, now lies delirious in a violent fever, and 'tis feared cannot recover, if Mr. Green does not speedily return.

Mr. Morgan, who, 'bating his foible of drinking, is a good sort of man, is in the greatest anxiety imaginable, and is gone in search of his friend, hoping, if he can meet him, to bring him to reason. Mr. Shenkin has made Mrs. Fluellen prisoner in his house, and swears she shall not escape till Mr. Green returns, when she shall on her oath answer the questions put to her by him. This makes great diversion for the neighbours. She cries she defies him, and threatens him at his peril to detain her. He answers, he heeds her words as wind, and leaves her locked up.

Such, my dearest Harriot, is the fatal consequence of people indulging themselves in defaming others. Can Mrs. Fluellen be deemed less than a murderer if the amiable Mrs. Green dies? A woman

man of her years, too, who should be hourly expecting a call from hence. How shocking the idea! No wonder she dislikes the appellation of *old*: it is guilt that makes age dreadful.



I have been just now informed that poor Mrs. Green, for about the space of five minutes, regained her senses, when recollection of her misfortunes made her relapse, and the Doctor fears there is no other alternative than madness or death.

Mr. Villars tells me this is not the first couple Mrs. Fluellen has made miserable by her wicked suggestions; that he knows a very worthy woman, who happened not to have such keen sensibility as Mrs. Green, that from such an account suffered many years ill-usage from her hus-

band, though he did not leave her, but was continually suspicious, which rendered the poor woman's life unhappy beyond expression.

I am exceedingly affected at Mrs. Green's deplorable fate, and by Mrs. Villars's permission have been several times to see her, though it gave me great pain to behold her melancholy condition. I was in hopes to find her senses restored, that I might administer all the comfort and consolation I could; but, alas! I was disappointed.

Lord Villars is gone with servants in quest of Mr. Green. I hope they will be so fortunate as to find him before the unhappy victim expires. Adieu! my Harriot.

SILENA HOWARD.

From

From the Same to the Same.

Elysium-Place.

I HAVE the pleasing satisfaction of informing you, my dear Harriot, that Mr. Green is returned, and his wife still lives. Lord Villars was so fortunate as to trace him to Bristol, where he found him at an inn. The unhappy man could not avoid his Lordship, and listened to his persuasive eloquence, which at last made him consent to return. In the interim Mr. Morgan arrived, and protested his innocence of the fact charged against him, his integrity, and friendship for Mr. Green. Lord Villars said the scene became very affecting. Mr. Green intreated his friend's pardon for having wronged him in idea, and listened to the calumny of a wretch unworthy to

F 2

live.

live. He wept exceedingly at hearing the melancholy account of his wife; and after they all had taken refreshment, they set out as fast as possible for Green-Hall. I was there when they arrived. Mrs. Green was in a delirious state, and we knew not whether to introduce her husband or not; but the Doctor said it perhaps might be the only means of recalling her from that state. Mr. Green was in unspeakable agony from the thoughts of being the cause of her desperate situation. He entered; she immediately knew him, gave a violent shriek, and fell into faintings which lasted two hours. The Doctor then gave her something to compose her; she slept a little, and waked more tranquil, but spoke so low as scarcely to be heard. She asked us if Mr. Green was not come—she thought she had seen him. By degrees

we

we acknowledged he was in the house, and he ventured up stairs again, where he on his knees intreated her pardon. She begged he would mention it no more, as, if he was convinced of her innocence, she was happy. After seeing her thus restored to peace of mind, I took my leave, and Lord Villars attended me home.

The following day Mr. Shenkin insisted on Mr. Green's coming before him to question Mrs. Fluellen; but that gentleman would not comply, as the sight of her, he said, would be horrible to him. However, Mr. Morgan went, and, with Mr. Shenkin, insisted upon her producing the author of her intelligence. They threatened her with a prosecution, and at last so alarmed her with the fear of it, that she confessed it was only her

own suspicion gave birth to that infamous insinuation. Mr. Shenkin then insisted she should give a written acknowledgment that the whole she had said of Mr. Morgan and Mrs. Green was a falsity of her own invention, that their characters might be cleared to the world. She refused at first, and said she would not make herself appear so black for all the foolish Justices in Wales. Mr. Shenkin was enraged, and threatened her for daring to insult a man of his consequence and dignity. Morgan then begged Justice Shenkin to compose himself, and let the wretch go; for he would prosecute her, and make her produce what hundreds she had, to pay for defamation. This made her lower her note again. She agreed to write what they desired, and declared she would leave the vile country for ever. At last she was released,

leased, and is actually removing her furniture to some other part of the world. Mrs. Green is still in a very languid state, but is out of danger they think, and 'tis said that Miss Smith and Mr. Morgan are to be united, which I am glad to hear, as it will be an additional security to that gentleman's and Mr. Green's friendship.

Lord Clandon is now by the consent of her parents addressing Miss Shenkin; yet still he has the effrontery, when a convenient opportunity offers, to continue insulting me. As I hope it will be but for a short duration, my utmost endeavours are exerted to bear it as patiently as I can, and avoid as much as possible affording him opportunities.

My spirits are much oppressed lately;

F 4

I find

I find not the tranquility I expected here : but time, I hope, will restore it, my beloved Harriot, and grant you the felicity you deserve. Many happy years may you be blessed, whatever is the fate of

Your unalterable friend,

SILENA HOWARD.

Lady DI HORTON to Madame ST. CLARE.

Shenkin-Hall.

'PON honour, St. Clare, old Fluellen has been in a dreadful scrape, by letting her tongue run too glib on people she had no manner of business with. From it, a Mr. Green here grew jealous of his wife—left her—and the poor woman had absolutely like to have died ; the consequence of which was, Shenkin, like a
ninny,

ninny, to shew his authority, confined the old forcerefs, as he called her; and most charming entertainment had I with their altercation. Fluellen was with us when news came Mrs. Green was expiring; (from some scandal that had been imparted to her husband concerning her, he had left her)—There it stopped; for Mr. Shenkin had just heard it from Morgan, and entered in a delightful rage, St. Clare.

“ There, Mrs. Fluellen!—there—— (lifting up his hands)—Fine doings of yours—fine doings by Got. I thought what would come of your prattling and tattling, and now it’s poor Mrs. Green you’ve killed with it.”

“ I killed her!—I!——Got pless me, Mr. Shenkin, I wonder to hear you talk so!—I!—Ha! ha! ha!—Poor man!”

“Pore man! How dare you apuse me so? I’ll convince you, tho’, I’m a Justice of the Peas, and I’ll detain you in my house safe, for I swear you shall be tucked-up if poor Mrs. Green dies by your wicked diabolical tongue. Oh! it’s an evil member with you!”

“Detain me at your peril, Mr. Justice. Ha! ha! ha!—Me!—What can you do to me?—I defy you!”

“By Got, Madam, you shall not defy me with impunity—so in—in,” said he, pushing her into Miss Shenkin’s bed-chamber.

She cried, grinning, “Unhand me, Mr. Justice—You know I can prosecute you for detaining me prisoner.”

“Aye,

"Aye, aye, Mrs. Make-lies," said he, locking her in, and taking the key; "you may now repent of your sins at leisure—Defy me, do you?"

"Yes, I do, Mr. Justice," said she, laughing, and bawling through the key-hole, in a hollow tone; "Detain me if you dare."

We descended to the parlour, St. Clare, and he followed.

I am tired of repeating the story, but must inform thee Mrs. Green is better—her husband returned—Fluellen made concession, and is gone, we hear, with her goods and chattels, to Ludlow. Now really her lies were abominable, because they answered no end; mere malice prepense. A creature to steal a

lover from one, or any thing of that sort, has some excuse to plead, you know, St. Clare; but I have no patience with the old harridan, for garrulity's sake, to forge idle news to disturb the tranquility of an innocent couple. I was going to drink oblivion to her memory, but, 'pon honour, I should then deprive myself of much mirth by frequently recalling her to mind.

Clandon is retailing his whole stock of fine speeches on Shenkin, who gives herself a multitude of airs; and Howard is confined to the house by a cold.—But I see my dear Villars approaching, therefore must bid thee a hearty adieu, my dear St. Clare.

Your's, &c.

DI HORTON.

Lord

Lord VILLARS to Lord DUNCAN.

Elysium-Place.

THE pursuit of happiness, which is, according to Pope, "our being's end and aim," lures us on through life: our expectations of it in the region we at present are, varies at different periods of our existence, and often when we imagine ourselves approaching it, the phantom is in reality farthest from us.

I thought, Duncan, some months since, that a total separation from Lady Villars would lay the foundation of my felicity, but the event has destroyed that illusive hope. I became a captive to the lovely Silena before I had regained my liberty, and there are so many insuperable obstacles at present to my possession of her,
on

on which my happiness depends, that it is at a very distant day, if ever, that I can flatter myself with that event.

To lull that flirt Lady Di Horton's suspicions of my passion for the adorable Miss Howard, I have lately become very obsequious to her Ladyship, but without avowing any particular esteem for her. It is very easy, Duncan, to make a woman of her stamp imagine that you have designs on her without feigning a passion—Her own vanity betrays her; and for the short time she or I shall remain here, she may be easily deceived. I do it to preserve my charmer from the mischief her Ladyship's revenge might otherwise bring on her. Dumont, who is very gallant with Lady Di's woman, informed me some time since, through that channel, of her Ladyship's disposition.

Miss

Miss Howard has got a little cold by being caught in a heavy shower one day coming from a neighbour's, but I hope no fever will ensue—She says she is well—Lovers fear the worst.

We were sitting alone yesterday evening, when I intreated her to take something warm at night: she was much depressed in spirits, and answered, with a sigh and tear, that she was obliged to me for my kind advice, but it was of very little signification what became of her. Then, rising from her seat, she walked up and down the room in seeming anxiety of mind.

I went and seized her lovely hand, Duncan; "Ah! my dear, my amiable Miss Howard, rend not my heart by so bitter a reflection," said I; "my existence
is

112 THE MUTABILITY OF

is interwoven in yours, and whatever afflictions you have I must partake of: impart them to your Villars, he will strive all in his power to alleviate your distress. My esteem, my respect, my regard, for you, is more than I can express; but your friendship is all I demand in return—it is all I can hope for.”

She withdrew her hand, and surveyed me with the keenest penetration.

“Oh! forgive me, my amiable friend,” continued I; “never more will I offend by a farther acknowledgment of my hopeless passion—It was involuntary—Say you will not refuse your friendship to him who would forfeit his life to preserve yours.”

“I must own, my Lord, you have
exceedingly

exceedingly surprized me by such a declaration, but the idea I have imbibed of your rectitude of sentiment makes me hope you will banish every sensation but those of friendship for me, from your breast, when I confess, what I must intreat you to conceal, that I am already a wife. Misfortunes compelled me to be separated from my husband—but that is not to my present purpose; all I wish, and mean, by this declaration, is, to convince your Lordship that a further pursuit of the unhappy object before you will be criminal, and oblige her to seek shelter elsewhere.”

Ah! Charles, I dared not avow that I before knew her condition, or had any other notion of her misfortunes than what she herself pleased to hint.—For some time I remained speechless and immoveable.

moveable. I observed her steal looks of pity at me, and heave heart-felt sighs. At last I with difficulty made shift to utter, "Yes, Madam, your will shall be obeyed, I will forget I ever had any sentiment but friendship for you—but will you not permit me to alleviate your present anxiety?"

"It was only a retrospect of the past gave me a slight return of sorrow, my Lord—But," said she, by way of putting an end to the conversation, "will your Lordship favour me so far as to read a few poems out of this new book which Mr. Villars has just received from London?"

I took it with reverence from her hand, and luckily or unluckily opened it, and read as follows:

ELEGY.

ELEGY.

“WHAT torture in the breast is pent,
When Hope withdraws her pleasing sway;
Reason, her substitute, in vain is sent
To rescue from Despair its destin’d prey.

Death will o’ercome what living was my foe,
Vanquish all pain, and triumph o’er desire;
Kind Atropos, approach, and end my woe,
Subdue the tyrant Love—expel his fire.

The lovely DELIA o’er my silent grave
May then with friendly tears lament my
fate;
Lament the victim that she could not save,
Or mitigate in life his wretched state.”

I could not avoid reading it with a peculiar emphasis, as it was so suitable to my state of mind at that juncture. My agitation made it difficult for me to proceed. Miss Howard observed it; and, rising hastily, said Mrs. Villars called, and immediately quitted the room.

My

116 THE MUTABILITY OF

My reflections were very gloomy ones; they turned on the villainy of Melville, who could deprive so angelic a creature of liberty, ruin her fame, then intirely neglect her, without hope of redress, or prospect of happier days, except death should snatch him hence, and set her free; but, alas! that hope must be distant, as he is so young a man.

It is impossible for me to remain here and not offend her—I cannot conceal my sentiments.—I must fly, and devote myself to misery. Oh! Duncan, you must comfort your almost despairing friend

VILLARS.

Miss

Miss HOWARD to Miss MEYNEL.

Penmawr.

WE have been these three weeks returning visits. The country is in many parts worthy the attention of a landscape-painter—the variety of prospects beautiful indeed. We found a sincere welcome and affectionate reception every where—Hospitality is a pleasing virtue with its help-mate Discretion; without that guide it frequently proves the ruin of many. I have met with so much civility in this country, it would be ungrateful in me to discommend it. Lady Di Horton will carry a very unfavourable idea of its inhabitants with her to England, as she will not be persuaded but all the ladies are actuated by the same principles as those she met at the town

town she visited. To condemn the people of a whole country for the sake of a very few individuals is ungenerous and narrow-minded; but her Ladyship will not be convinced, and strikes me silent by some flighty speech.

The gentleman and lady of this mansion are a very amiable couple: Mr. Price has great genius and taste for improving his estate, which affords him both amusement and profit. We return home in two days, my dear Harriot. Great preparations are making for Miss Shenkin's wedding. Lord Villars intends quitting this country before the consummation of it, which Lady Di Horton is much displeased at. I hope—yet I must be silent at present.

The winter is approaching very fast—
the

the fallen leaves are scattered around, and convey gloomy ideas to a mind already too much attuned to melancholy observations. Oh! my Harriot, forgive me; I cannot erase my misfortunes from remembrance—they occur frequently, when with a falling tear I sighing whisper to myself, Alas! how tedious is life to the unhappy!

In our way hither we dined at a gentleman's who is a celebrated antiloquist. He was at war with every sentence that was uttered. Lord Villars admired the situation of his house; he immediately replied, "it was the worst in the whole country." His Lordship said he could not help differing in opinion from him: "O, your Lordship is no judge then," answered he rudely. Lord Villars bowed. It seems to be that man's only happiness
to

to contradict every person he meets with. What a strange miserable disposition! and what a dreadful life must his wife lead!

I forgot, my dearest Harriot, in my last, to congratulate you on your intimacy with the worthy Mrs. Gordon. I knew you would think yourself happy in her friendship, and she in yours. Adieu!

SILENA HOWARD.

Miss HOWARD to Miss MEYNEL.

Elysium-Place.

MY pen trembles in my hand, Harriot—I am going to confess my involuntary guilt. Oh! were it not in my opinion a breach in that friendship which
has

has ever subsisted between us, I would sooner die than avow what must humiliate me in your eyes, and what makes me despicable in my own. Lord Villars——Can you not guess the rest, Harriot, and spare me the pain of a recital?—I esteem him too much—Ah! Harriot, it was more than friendship made me so much admire his virtues, but it was his amiable qualifications first caused it. His tenderness—his friendship for me——Ah! why was I so long blind to his and my own misery?—I should at first have quitted Elysium-Place—but how could I before I perceived the danger? When Mr. Clairville and others made offers of love, I heard them with horror, knowing myself a wife; but my guilty heart received with pleasure every assiduity of Lord Villars, without reflecting on the criminality, till by broken

hints he avowed more than friendship—then I beheld the precipice before me, and, to cut him off from hope, told him I was already married. He seemed not much surprised at the news; but, in great anxiety of mind, promised never more to offend by a further declaration. His behaviour encreased my unfortunate esteem. While we were on our little tour he kept his word, though to appearance he was very unhappy. We returned, and he resolved to leave us. Had he not taken this resolution, I was determined to quit Mrs. Villars, though I might not easily find another retreat so suitable, independent of his Lordship. If he returns next summer, I must fly, let what will be the consequence; absence is the only remedy for us both. Ah! Harriot, the night before his departure, when we were left alone, with
 what

what delicacy and tenderness did he bid me a final adieu ! “ I am going to leave you, Madam,” said he, “ because I am convinced it gives pain to your generous and feeling heart to behold the unhappiness you cannot prevent ; your friendship is all I can ever expect or desire, and that I hope you will not deny me at a distance from you ; it will be my only consolation in the dreary vale of affliction which my future days must be spent in—A sentiment so pure cannot offend heaven. Let me intreat likewise, Madam, that if my service or interest can at any future period be of use to you, or any friend of yours, you will command them.—Will you not grant me your pity and friendship ?” said he, in the most affecting accents.

Oh ! my dear Harriot, how extremely

wretched was your friend ! It was with the greatest difficulty imaginable I made any answer. Cruel duty imposed severity, but we were going to part for ever ; might it not relax a little then ?

“ Alas ! my Lord,” returned I, “ if my pity and friendship are of any avail, you have them. My sincere wishes and prayers will be for a restoration of that peace of mind you say is fled. I doubt not but time, and the numerous superior objects you will meet with in polite circles, will intirely eradicate the slight impression you received in your rural visit, and leave only a friendship, which I shall be honoured by.”

“ Ah ! Madam,” said he, “ you are ignorant of your power ; it is the charms of your mind I admire ; similar ones I cannot

cannot meet with amidst folly and dissipation.—Exterior charms, heightened by art, cannot seduce me; 'tis Nature I admire, and a soul replete with virtue and goodness.—An esteem founded on these can never be diminished.”

The melancholy air which he delivered his sentiments in, unguarded me; spite of all caution, I shed tears, and intreated him to forget me.

“Amiable friend,” said he, taking my hand, “in that I must disobey you.”

At that crisis Lady Di Horton and Miss Shenkin entered. Her Ladyship rallied him on his serious looks, and invited him to visit her in Grosvenor-Street.

I saw him not the ensuing morning,

as I determined to spare him and myself the embarrassment of taking leave before Mr. and Mrs. Villars, who might easily have perceived our distress.

It is with greater horror that I now reflect on my union with the Marquis; but yet there would have been another insurmountable bar, for you know my opinion concerning divorces, my dear Harriot: therefore, while Lady Villars lives, were I free, I would not accept of his Lordship's hand.

But why do I reason in this criminal manner? Am I not Melville's wife? and shall I, like him, perfidiously transfer my love to another?—Oh! Harriot, my bosom is in a perpetual warfare—I am constantly on my knees imploring offended Heaven for peace of mind;
for

for resolution to banish from my thoughts the object which at present has an undue share in them.—Pity me, Harriot—forgive me.—I strive against a passion my reason condemns, what can I do more?—Oh! I am wretched; all my misfortunes, reviving, croud upon my mind, and almost overwhelm me! If Melville had proved constant, my esteem would have continued for him, and this affliction would never have overtaken me.—Ah! no, I palliate in vain; I was a stranger to love till I knew Lord Villars: my regard for Melville sprung only from a dutiful and grateful friendship.—Oh! what a wretch am I upon the earth!—Divine, omnipotent Power, preserve my senses; pardon my murmuring; let not an insignificant mortal repine at thy dispensations, but endue me with patience and fortitude to submit to them, till, in
 thy

thy good time, it shall seem fit to thee to end my misery and life together.— Oh! Harriot, how sensibly the least deviation from the path of rectitude must affect a heart unwilling to err!—It wounds, indeed, very deeply, that of your agonized, self-condemned

SILENA HOWARD.

Miss HOWARD to Miss MEYNEL.

Elysium-Place.

THE violent perturbation of mind under which I wrote last to you, my dear Harriot, (thanks to that Being who listens to the ardent petitions of contrite mortals,) has almost subsided to a calm. Nevertheless, I must confess, there still remains too much tender concern annexed to the remembrance of Lord Villars.

Ah!

Ah ! Harriot, I can never, I fear, wholly annihilate it : but one thing I must intreat you to comply with ; that is, never to mention him in your letters to me. As you say he is the intimate friend of your cousin, I have reason to fear seeing his name often, lest it should prove a means of increasing my unhappiness and guilt. I hear of him too frequently as it is, from Mr. Villars ; but I am determined to avoid that, or thinking of him, as much as in my power lies. Was I to give way to reflection on his many amiable qualities, I should only be working my own misery during existence, as I must never see him more.

I have been boasting of a calm, my dear friend ; but a very small indulgence of this sort would again hurry me into distraction. This is the last letter you

shall receive on a subject which yields nothing but uneasiness, and renders me culpable in mine own eyes. However, you will yourself see Lord Villars, and find how worthy he is of every person's esteem—You will tell me—ah! no—you must not tell me any thing—you must not mention him to me. Alas! how incoherent I am? Pity me, Harriot. Why does not Reason re-assume her sway?—Cruel destiny!—But I must lay aside my pen; for at present I find, in spite of me, it will be employed on no other subject. Oh! Harriot—



Miss Shenkin's settlements are almost finished, and Lord Clandon has the assurance to tell me he marries her fifteen-hundred a year. A friend of his Lordship is expected to attend the wedding.

Lady

Lady Di Horton wants it over much. I perceive that she is now tired of the country. Her partiality for me is much lessened: but Miss Shenkin wants me to quit Mrs. Villars to live with her. You may be certain, for many reasons, my dear friend, I denied her.

Mrs. Green is now almost recovered, and we have had the surprising news that Mrs. Fluellen is married to a young curate at the place she went to. The account of it she wrote herself to a cousin in this country. She will now, I suppose, be heartily punished for her iniquities.

Adieu! my dearest Harriot. It is my constant wish that Lord and Lady Lorton may be convinced how worthy you are to fix their son's happiness. I should

imagine, that if he ventured to ask their consent, he would not meet with a refusal—But you must both be better judges of the case, as you are on the spot, and well acquainted with their dispositions.—May the sun of bliss ever attend you, unobscured by those clouds which, with very few intervals, have been constantly pouring down woes on the devoted head of

SILENA HOWARD!

Lady Di HORTON to Madame ST. CLARE.

Sbenkin-Hall.

THE account of your amour with Silvio came in good time; for, 'pon honour, I was quite *à la mort*. The lovely Villars is fled to the *beau monde*, and I vow I was almost tempted to infringe
the

the laws decorum has prescribed to our sex, and fly with him—But Shenkin's confounded wedding was another impediment. You know, as it is to be consummated so soon, it would have been very ill-bred to depart. Villars quitted me with great respect, and promised to visit me at London as soon as he should hear of my arrival there; but I have still some suspicion, St. Clare, of his liking Howard. She, too, has been quite in the dumps since his departure. Yet, why did he leave her, if that was the case?—I vow, St. Clare, I know not what to think of it?—If I was convinced it was really so, most certainly I would contrive some method of displacing her: but perhaps that might be worse; for now she will be far enough from him for some months, and I shall have an opportunity of compleating my triumph.—

134 THE MUTABILITY OF

triumph.—If I am disappointed in my design, I will not fail to send some knight-errant to wreak my revenge on her. Don't you think that will be the best plan, St. Clare? Yet, as you said in a former letter, I can't think such an insipid can have gained advantage over my superior and brilliant charms. No, no; my vanity and friendly mirror convince me you are right.

I have had two or three 'squires here dying for my *Ladyship*, and Clandon begins to be very gallant; but he is a fool, and I should lose my reputation by flirting with him. He tells me a very intimate friend of his will arrive soon to see him shackled, and that he is an elegant, sensible young fellow; so I have some chance of keeping up my spirits with him during my stay in this hideous place.

The

The wind blows—horrible storms succeed. I vow, St. Clare, I would not remain here the winter to become mistress of the principality, and receive due homage, as sovereign, for ever.—Oh! I could never forego the delights of the enchanting metropolis: the constant attendance of Boreas, and the continual wrath of Neptune, during the winter months, would make one always anticipating death; and who would think of that spectre in the bloom of youth and beauty?

Apropos: it is the custom among the vulgar hottentots of this country—the cottagers I mean—when they imagine any of their kindred or friends expiring (which by their ignorance may often be supposed when not really so)—to turn them upon their left side, in order to send them the easier out of the world,

as

as they define it; and, hastily jerking away the pillow or bolster, they let the dying person's head fall suddenly and forcibly on the bedstead; by which means the sick folks make their exit a little sooner perhaps than Nature intended: a rare expedient, St. Clare, for a young fellow to send an old one out of the world whom he is to become heir to.

What do you think? Old Fluellen has fastened on some young curate for life. Only think of being tied to such a harridan "till death doth them part;" for I vow, St. Clare, I believe she will live to reckon a hundred. To be sure there was fascination in his eyes that made her forget to weep after "her dear friend" I told you, St. Clare, she was fonder of novels than prayer-books: behold the consequence! But the vulgar

gar adage is, marriage and hanging are controlled by destiny.

Shenkin paints herself higher than an Italian singer; but Clandon wants her fortune; so I suppose, let her act as she will, he will not sue for a divorce.

I had a letter from town not long since, which mentioned that Melville begins to disagree with his present lady, who turns out a virago. You are so full of Silvio, that you told me no news in your last.

Adieu! St. Clare. In my next you will find an account of the wedding, and something of our removal towards you. Till when, and ever, I remain

Your's,

DI HORTON.

Miss

Miss HOWARD to Miss MEYNEL.

Elysium-Place.

WHY, my dear Harriot, will you write to me of Lord Villars, when you know how necessary it is I should forget him?—But you tell me “it is only this time you intend doing it, as you thought I should expect your opinion of him—That you will acquit me from blame in not being able to withhold my friendship from so worthy an object.” If we were both at liberty, indeed, it would be excusable; but, as it is, my dear friend, the idea of him is not to be cherished without my contracting a sense of guilt. Oh! do not encourage me to think myself innocent. You cannot—you will not—you know it is criminal;—only at present strive to soothe my mind to peace.

Kind

Kind friend ! May your wishes prevail !
 But, ah ! Harriot, I fear it is not here
 they will be accomplished—I too fre-
 quently hear of the amiable Lord, from
 his uncle Mr. Villars, to be able to for-
 get him ; his darling nephew is his con-
 stant topic. Think what I must suffer ;
 indeed, sometimes, I fear that to recover
 my tranquility I must leave this friendly
 mansion, and seek it in another country.

I have heard from Lady Di that the
 Marquis and Violetta begin to be un-
 happy, and that she is striving for the
 mastery. She will find herself mistaken.
 The Marquis, should he once dislike her,
 will not easily be regained : he will not,
 I am sure, by capricious tyranny ; tho'
 this takes effect on some violent tempers
 sooner than a milder conduct. She may,
 perhaps, be brought to repent of the
 injury

injury she has done me. But what then! I can draw no ray of hope from it. The Marquis has plunged me too deep in infamy ever to extricate me without dishonouring himself. Ah! Melville, she who was the occasion of thy cruelty to me, may now prove a tormentor to thyself; and in some unhappy moments thou mayst perhaps wish for the gentle Adelaide again, whom thou hast taken such pains to discard, and render miserable. Providence often orders it so, that what we imagine will make for our good here, often proves our greatest bane. Melville thought he could not exist without Violetta: he possessed her, and now she proves a plague to that existence. How just the punishment for his usage of me!—But I forgive him—I pity his infatuation——

I was

I was sent for by Mrs. Villars, who informed me that we must dress to go and dine at Mr. Shenkin's, in honour of the stranger who is to pay his compliments as groomsmen *futurus*. The post will be going off in my absence; for which reason I will close my letter, wishing you a speedy attainment of happiness with your Duncan.

SILENA HOWARD.

Miss HOWARD to Miss MEYNEL.

Elysium-Place.

WHEN we arrived at Shenkin-Hall, Mr. Clairville flew to assist us in alighting from the carriage, and conducted us to the drawing-room. "Ah! Miss Howard," said he, "this stranger must infallibly fall a victim to your charms; perhaps,

perhaps, too, from his superior merit, he may be more successful than myself."

"Time will convince you, Sir, of your mistake in both points," returned I.

We could say no more before Mrs. Villars entered the room, and we followed.

A gentleman sprung forwards—Oh! Harriot, what was my surprise and horror at seeing the very Mr. Nugent who had insulted me at Nice.

"By Heaven," exclaimed he, "my adorable Miss Bel"—"Howard," interrupted I, to prevent, if possible, his mentioning my maiden name.

He took the hint, imagining there
was

was some mystery, and rejoined, "How long have you been in this country, my lovely Miss ——— Howard?"

Lady Di Horton observed what passed, and looked astonished, as did Mr. Clairville. I was in great agitation of mind, expecting every moment he would betray me. He continued obsequious, and seated himself by me.

"You seem to be old acquaintance," said her Ladyship ironically—"’Pon honour, it was lucky you met here."

"I swear, my Lady," returned he, "I esteem it a very great happiness: but Miss ——— Miss Howard will, perhaps, refuse the acknowledgment of a former acquaintance."

"By

“By no means, Sir; old friends always retain the place with me they ever had, and you will be still intitled to the same reception I gave you when I was happy in having my friend alive to protect me.” I looked at him, at the same time, with a meaning, that he might learn, from what I said, that I would not accept of any address from him, though I feared provoking him, lest he should discover me.

He bowed thanks, and whispered Lord Clandon, who soon after proposed walking before dinner. His Lordship escorted Lady Di, Mr. Clairville Miss Shenkin, and Mr. Nugent fell to my lot.

They walked before us, and Lord Clandon and Miss Shenkin drawing their companions

companions attention from Mr. Nugent and myself, the latter began with, "I desired my friend, if possible, to indulge me with a private conversation with you, my charming Miss Belmont, that I might receive instructions how to proceed, during my stay here, in answering the interrogations which will be put to me concerning our former acquaintance; for I find they are ignorant of your affair with the Marquis. Ah! Miss Belmont, how could you use me with such severity and cruelty!—But let me hope you will now relax, and make your adorer happy—My purse shall be at your command—I will present you a *charte blanche*"——

"Permit me, Sir, to interrupt your proceeding; I am still virtuous; the possession of empires should never allure me to the vicious step you propose; but

VOL. II.

H

I can't

I can't now so much blame you for your unworthy sentiments of me, as I am deserted by my husband, family, and friends. A state of dependance is what I am now obliged to submit to, and were I known to be the person who claims Melville as her husband, I should be deprived even of that, should be discountenanced everywhere, should become a prey to want. In the most solemn manner, appealing to Heaven, I vow that I am the real and lawful wife of the Marquis of Melville, and that I am as unpolluted by the Count de St. Lou as yourself. If you would take time for reflection, Mr. Nugent, you must be convinced of my innocence.—My relations know not where I am—Was my mind disposed for intrigue, I am young undoubtedly, and therefore need not be at a loss for an abode with some lover who would maintain

tain me according to my wishes—But I prefer virtue, poverty, or servitude, to splendid vice.” I then informed him in what manner I was introduced to the Villars’ family, and of their kind treatment of me. “I have found a safe asylum, Sir,” continued I, “but you have it in your power, by broaching the secrets I wish to be concealed, to effect my discharge, and to sink me into fresh troubles: notwithstanding which, be assured, Mr. Nugent, I shall never listen to your addresses, or any other man’s, while the Marquis lives. And if you intend to revenge my rejection of your criminal proposal, do it forthwith, that I may speedily know the worst.”

“Ah! Miss Belmont,” returned he, “you are sensible of your power over me: I swear I pity you extremely, and

assure you, however violent my passion, I will never betray you, my sweet creature—even should you continue inflexibly unkind.”

By this time Lady Di was quite out of patience; she had marked Nugent as her victim, and would no longer be withheld from him. She approached to ask his opinion of the place. Mr. Clairville likewise seemed unhappy, and escaped to me from Miss Shenkin. “My prognostication was true, Miss Howard,” said he; “Mr. Nugent has the advantage of me by a prior acquaintance—But if your happiness is the consequence I ought not to remonstrate.”

“Be assured, Sir,” returned I, “you are exceedingly deceived. My friendship for you is superior to that I have
for

for Mr. Nugent. Our acquaintance, in the days of my prosperity, was very flight; only his manner of expressing himself makes an observer imagine more than in reality subsists."

"There is no other alternative than for me to believe you, Madam; but"—(*he paused*)—"Howard was not your name when he knew you."

"It was not, Sir," returned I, blushing. "To avoid disgracing my relations, when I was reduced to my present situation, I thought it proper to take another name."

He bowed, saying, "Oh! that you would permit a man who loves you beyond expression once more to change your name, and place you in a more

elevated situation, though not equal to your merit."

"Let me intreat you, Mr. Clairville," said I, "to desist from importuning what I cannot grant—what I must ever deny. Why will you persevere in making yourself and me unhappy?"

"Oh! Miss Howard," said he, sighing, "must I then ever sue in vain?"

Nugent turned round, and joined us, to the visible displeasure of Lady Di. We returned to the house, where, after tea, we formed a concert to conclude the evening. There was one wanting to make it harmonious. Oh! my Harriot, you may guess whom I mean. If I had not observed it, Mrs. Villars would have reminded me, by saying her nephew

Orphus

Orphus was wanting; to which she subjoined, as usual, a laugh.

Mr. Nugent asked if Mr. Orphus was near at hand, and could be sent for.

“ Ah! Lord, no,” returned she; “ ha! ha! ha! I wish he was; but poor Lord Villars is as far off as smoky London.— Ha! ha! I call him Orphus because you know the god called so used to excel every one.”

“ Oh! I beg pardon, Madam,” said he, sneering at her gravely—“ I did not know where Orpheus resided.”

The wedding is to be celebrated in a week's time; soon after which all the visitants will take their departure. I hope Mr. Nugent will leave the country

without betraying me, as it will not be easy for me to gain such another asylum without a strong recommendation.

I remain,

My dear Harriot,

Your most sincere friend,

SILENA HOWARD.

Miss HOWARD to Miss MEYNEL.

Elysium-Place.

MR. Nugent continues to be troublesome, notwithstanding the fixed disdain with which I have rejected his libidinous suit. Ah! my Harriot, how obstinate the heart that premeditates mischief? There is no possibility of turning it from its purpose. To heighten my uneasiness, Nugent declares, that, if I will

will not comply with his wishes, he will no longer conceal my history, but entertain Lady Di with a disclosure of it, who is very desirous to know who I am. Not to be under obligations to an infamous fellow, who so anxiously endeavours to plunge me in guilt, I told him that he was at liberty to act in that respect as he pleased; and should Mrs. Villars dismiss me, upon hearing his story, I should still have the consolation of bosom virtue to accompany me, while peace of mind and Providence shall be my guide. His answer was well adapted to the libertinism and licentiousness of his character. Should revenge urge him to fulfil what he threatened, I don't imagine Mr. Villars would gratify him so far as to desert me. His great humanity would make him reflect on my misfortunes, and, I think, reflection would

soon persuade so humane a person of my innocence; but if otherwise, I must submit. Indeed, it will not now be so great a hardship, as I wish to banish the amiable Lord Villars from my remembrance. But this is a subject in which I must not indulge myself, my dear friend. Improper ideas should be hastily expelled. They are fatal.

We hear that the unhappy Mrs. Fluellen is at the point of death: her husband has deserted her, and conveyed her fortune with him no one knows whither. May affliction bring on repentance, and cause her to propitiate that offended Power to whom the secrets of all hearts are known.

Next week Miss Shenkin's wedding is to be celebrated. She is full of friendly professions

professions to me, and urges me much to attend her to London. Alas! she knows not the misfortunes I have there already experienced, or how unfit I am for company. She is too much attached to gallantry to be long satisfied with the attendance of one who would be continually passing censure on what *she* terms innocent amusement. She knows not the horror in which I hold her principles. Situated as I am, I have no business to meddle with her actions—I must not say any thing, Harriot—But, by Nugent's account of her, she is unworthy being even Lord Clandon's wife.

I find warm altercations continue between Violetta and Melville. They say she is jealous of him to desperation, and vows revenge. He tells her, she had best rest at peace, or he will totally dis-

card her. Poor Melville! Perhaps he may now wish he had been faithful to his once beloved Adelaide.—But it cannot be—His own honour will never permit him to disavow Violetta. Ah! Harriot, I must remain a fugitive, and expect only to find repose in the silent grave. There the wicked cease from troubling—there are the weary at rest.

Adieu!

SILENA HOWARD.

Lady DI HORTON to Madame ST. CLARE.

Sbenkin-Hall.

I VOW, St. Clare, you provoke me exceedingly with your surmises. Why should you imagine my silence proceeds from being engaged in some agreeable adventure,

ture, when you know the delight of my soul, my charming Villars, is far distant? I have been immerfed in perplexities and troubles.—Confound this fyren Howard, ſhe makes my ſuperior charms of no effect. Oh! I could tear her piece-meal. This Nugent is a charming fellow, but a mere blank in comparifon with Villars. He would do very well for a *chaperon* in my lovely fellow's abſence—a tolerable figure for a dangler—and for ſuch ſmall purpoſe I had fixed him in my idea; but this creature, this Howard, it ſeems, was an old acquaintance. He was in raptures at the unexpected ſight of her, and had like to have betrayed her hiſtory, which, ſpite of all my alluring arts, I have not yet been able to extract from him. In the interim, Patch received a letter from George, a fellow belonging to Villars, acquainting her his Lordſhip had

had been extremely ill on the road, but had given strict orders that it should be concealed from his uncle; and that they all knew he was in love with Miss Howard, which was the cause of his illness. You must know I compelled Patch (whose pride was above a footman) to listen to this fellow's addresses, and correspond with him, that I might hear of my adorable Villars: with great promises of reward for making her undergo such indignity, she complied. 'Pon honour, St. Clare, I am angry with myself for still harbouring such favourable sentiments of a man who slights my charms: but Villars is—Oh! he is engaging beyond description. I have this morning been tampering with Nugent, and listened to his passion for Howard—advised him to display her secret history, as perhaps Mrs. Villars might dismiss her, and she

she might be easily entrapped into a snare of his—a thousand expedients might be formed to put her into his power, &c.—(Oh! for revenge on her, St. Clare.)—He seemed to listen with attention, and I pursued my advice; that, to avoid offending her intentionally, he should communicate it some evening before company, feigning to be drunk. He swore, if she would not be more favourable to him, he would comply with my advice; but I could not persuade him to let my curiosity into her history. It signifies, indeed, not much to me, if I could but get her removed from the knowledge of my Villars—My Villars—Confusion to her, he is *her* Villars, I think. It is a great mystery to me, too—Why don't he marry her?—Why don't he —— —? I vow, St. Clare, it's past my divination, and I am almost distracted at the disappointment

ment of my wishes. 'Pon honour, I am on the wing to quit this place; for the days get very short, the wind roars, and with impetuous blasts frequently threatens the demolition of this Welch castle. The waves at a small distance dash against the rugged rocks, and fill one with horror and the spleen. Really, St. Clare, were it not for the numerous objects which are continually filling the house, I should be annihilated, or deeply absorbed in the vapours; and, with the addition of my unfortunate passion, should be almost tempted, like Sappho, to precipitate myself from some stupendous mountain into the main. I need not travel far in this country to execute such a purpose. I was some time since visiting a family, St. Clare, whose dwelling-house was situate in a valley surrounded by mountains, mostly barren; but a few
acres

acres separated the house from the mountains. How those poor wretches can live there throughout the winter, in so confined and dreadful a place, is to me astonishing. I am certain one dreary month would totally demolish me. No drawing-room, no opera, no Pantheon, &c. The idea is insupportable: "Horrible, horrible, most horrible!"

As for the men of this country, they may as well breathe here as in any other place. From dinner to different hours at night, according as they are able to bear it, they dedicate to brutal Bacchus, and are conveyed to bed by their servants, a disgrace to human nature, and the blindness of Fortune, that can shower favours on such a crew. But why do I devote my pen in the least to these inanimates, when Villars claims all my attention?

tention? Patch has received another letter from her admirer, which says my charming fellow is tolerably recovered, and now in London. Do, my dear St. Clare, find means to inform me concerning him; but you must be expeditious, for my stay here will be short. I must execute revenge, tho', on Howard, before I depart, to put her out of Villars's way: Nugent shall be my instrument. Adieu!

Yours, &c.

DI HORTON.

Miss HOWARD to Miss MEYNEL.

Elysium-Place.

Y^Esterday, my dear Harriot, Miss Shenkin was made happy, by being put in possession of the legal title of "your Ladyship,"

Ladyship," and Lord Clandon, by enjoying in idea her future fortune, for at present she has only nine thousand pounds. I believe a more indifferent couple never met each other at the altar. Strange infatuation! May they never have reason to repent it. The evening was concluded with a ball, which is to be repeated again to-night. We are to attend. Mr. Nugent, with whom I was obliged to dance, behaved with such insolence, that I was on the brink of applying to Mr. Villars for redress; but the reflection that I must soon then be displayed as Adelaide Belmont by him, in revenge, made me remain silent; and, as a few days will take him from me, I practised the philosophy of necessity, and determined to bear it. Lady Di seemed pleased at detecting my distress, and several times wished me joy of my conquest; provoked at which, I answered,

answered, he was too insignificant, and too disagreeable, to occasion joy; that disdain and abhorrence were the sentiments he excited in me, for of all earthly creatures a coxcomb was most my aversion.

“ Oh Heavens !” said the new-made Lady Clandon, “ is it possible that you can be displeased with the tenderness of the love-inspiring Nugent ? Ah ! no—you deceive us—*en vérité*, Silena, *il est impossible*.”

“ Indeed, my Lady, it is *not* impossible, but veritable,” returned I.

“ Ah ! Howard, you still dissemble—Come, come, confess to us his powerful charms have subdued you. *Il n'en saura rien*: we will be your faithful confidants.”

“ I can

“ I can only repeat, what I before averred, Madam, that he is, according to my taste, a disgusting man, and that I shall see him depart with pleasure.”

We were interrupted by some of the company, who called us to join the dancers; and thus a period was put to our little contest.

Mr. Shenkin and all the Welch gentlemen were so intoxicated upon this occasion, that some of the ladies cloaths received the effects of their inebriety, which caused great murmuring. The smell of tobacco was likewise intolerable. I hope never to be at so disagreeable a wedding again.

But I am ordered to attend Mrs. Villars to this scene of disagreeable confusion

sion again; therefore, for the present, adieu! my dear friend.



Ah! my dear Harriot, how vain the boast of philosophy and fortitude! Misfortunes, repeated misfortunes, make the phantom fly far away, and resign us wholly to pusillanimous dejection. Mr. Nugent has enjoyed his full measure of revenge on your unhappy friend, and made her a subject for the sport of the company: but you will be anxious to hear particulars, and you shall be gratified.

A numerous company were assembled, very few of the gentlemen attended the tea-table, and Mr. Nugent was one of those who remained drinking in the parlour. The ball began; Mr. Clairville
was

was my partner; it was a disagreeable scene of confusion, similar to the preceding day. Mr. Clairville's remarks were sensible and delicate, as usual. At last supper was announced; we repaired to it, each gentleman seated by his partner. We had been about half an hour at table, when Mr. Nugent entered, extremely intoxicated. Mr. Shenkin and all that had stayed below seemed in the same situation. Mr. Nugent staggered up to me, saying, "'Pon my soul, my lovely Marchioness, I can keep your council no longer——so——so leave these mountaineers, and return——return to my embraces. Why should you still bemoan the loss of Melville? for—for, my dear creature, I swear I will maintain you as well as he did; and you was not so coy to me at Nice——my charmer."——Oh! consider——The greatest astonishment imaginable

imaginable was imprinted on the countenance of every one present—their eyes were all fixed on me—when Lady Di interrupted him by saying, “Heavens! Mr. Nugent, is it possible? Is she really the misnamed Marchioness of Melville, the real Miss Belmont?”

“’Pon my veracity, Lady Di, the very same; and a sweet creature she is—Nobody shall affront her—I will protect her—She *has* been—aye—and still—still shall be mine.—As for Count de St. Lou, he grew fickle, and forsook her, with the Marquis—but *I* will—pos—I will be constant for ever.”

During this harangue, the conflict within my poor tortured bosom prevented utterance—No friendly tears came to my relief—I was the very statue of Woe.

Various

Various passions seemed to take possession of Mr. Clairville by turns. "Is it possible!" exclaimed he. Then again starting up in rage, "Sir," said he, "you must justify your aspersions on this lady at a proper time."

"'Pon my veracity, Clairville, I'm ready to do it, if the sweet creature denies what I say to be truth."

I at that moment resumed courage, and, rising from my seat, said, "Let me intreat you, Mr. Clairville, that so unfortunate a wretch as I may not be the means of dispute or animosity. I will not, gentlemen and ladies, attempt to deny I was once the happy Adelaide Belmont, supported by tender parents, and a noble family. The Marquis of Melville, at Montpelier, would take no

denial to his suit; but, his uncle being then surviving, he intreated the marriage ceremony might be performed in private. My dying father," said I, weeping, "saw our hands joined. I solemnly assert, before all-righteous Heaven, that I am his lawful wife, and innocent of the crimes laid to my charge. As for Mr. Nugent, chance conducted him to Nice, where he shocked me with proposals which I refused with horror. Chance conducted him here again, where, being enraged at me for refusing his infamous desires, he has, I suppose, determined on this revenge, in hopes, my valuable benefactors, to prevail with you to withdraw your protection, and leave me a prey to poverty."——

I could say no more—my voice faltered—I was on the brink of fainting—
when

when Mr. Clairville snatched Lady Di's smelling-bottle, and Mr. Villars bid me resume courage, that *he* would protect me.

Most of the company set down my conduct to the account of female art; and, as peoples virtues in general are less frequently listened to than their vices, I seemed to be chiefly given over, especially by the ladies. "Oh! it was impossible all my friends would have deserted me, if my guilt had not been atrocious; they could therefore no longer with decorum countenance me:—they were sorry a woman of so good family should so disgrace it." You may imagine, my dear Harriot, there were many bitter reflections at my expence. Mrs. Shenkin and some other ladies said, "They must beg to be excused receiving me,

as they could never think of taking up the cause of a woman who was openly abandoned by her whole family."

"By Heaven!" said Mr. Clairville, "she has more virtue and more goodness than all you ladies can boast of possessing among you. Do you think, if she was actuated by such abandoned principles, that she would have been the humble companion of any insolent lady? No! She might at any time enjoy splendor and infamy—Her lovely form"—

"I swear, Clairville," interrupted Nugent, "you are a noble fellow for thus—This vindication of my sweet girl reflects honour upon your generosity."

"Sir," said Mr. Villars, "at present she is under my protection, and shall not
be

be insulted. If she has been guilty, she is to be commended for her reformation, and if innocent, unfortunate indeed. Her refusal of Mr. Clairville shews a nobleness of soul, and is a proof of her innocence. Many women by private marriages have been made miserable, by uniting with villains—she may be a victim—her family may be extremely blameable in deserting her, as they have done, and obliging her to a life of dependence—therefore, since she has no friends left, I shall think it my duty, as a Christian, to protect her, spite of the censure of misjudging people.” Then turning to a servant, “Be so obliging as to order my carriage,” said he; “she shall no longer intrude on a company who in her prosperity would have thought themselves honoured by receiving her.”

Mr. Villars' speech struck an awe upon all present, and for a few moments silenced their severity; but we could hear Lady Clandon and a few others, before we departed, saying, "Pretty innocent, indeed!—The old fellow's mistress, I suppose." We were informed the carriage was ready, when Mr. Clairville conducted Mrs. Villars, and Mr. Villars your friend, into it, the former gentleman wishing us a good night. A total silence prevailed till we entered the parlour here. I passed the interval in tears. Mrs. Villars broke silence with "Well, I declare, Silena, this is a strange story; upon my word, it's very comical that I should have a Marchioness for my companion."

"Cease! cease tormenting her," cried Mr. Villars, rousing himself from a reverie.—

verie.—“ I wish, Miss Belmont, you had not so carefully concealed your story from my knowledge. I must believe you innocent, from the virtuous sentiments you have displayed since your arrival here. —’Tis strange!—Deserted by all your family !”

I recollected, my dear Harriot, that fortunately your packet of letters was still with me. I therefore proffered them for his perusal, and acquainted him with my accidentally meeting Mrs. Gordon. He accepted them, assured me he would still protect me, and begged I would endeavour to rest after the new perturbation my spirits had undergone.

Mrs. Villars said, “ Aye, do, poor thing; they have teized you sadly.”

I retired to my solitary chamber, and have passed the night hitherto in reciting the fresh mortification I have undergone. Yet how thankful I should be to Providence that my benefactors do not condemn me! I have a safe asylum still, let that encourage me not to despond, nor to despair—rather let it incite a ray of hope to illumine my dejected heart, and dispel the grief that is now too predominant upon it. Afflictions are messengers sent from Heaven to wean us from indulging too much the joys of the world. I will endeavour to think them such.

As the post sets off early in the morning, I shall close my letter, and very soon write to you again; till when, my dear friend, and at all times, I am your affectionate

SILENA HOWARD.

Lady DI HORTON to Madame ST. CLARE.

Sbenkin-Hall.

A MOST delightful execution, 'pon honour, St. Clare—The fair hypocrite is displayed in the very light I could wish—She proves to be the identical mock Marchioness who made such eclat at Paris, and was disgraced at London—Miss Belmont I mean, St. Clare. I played my cards well with Nugent, and, by distributing hopes and fears to him, at last, for his imaginary benefit, made him submit to my desire. The time of his departure drawing nigh, he resolved, as the only means of getting her into his power, to disgrace her here: therefore, pretending to be drunk, at the time that he was in fact sober, he entered in the midst of the strange concourse of beings

affembled on account of Clandon's wedding, and addrested her by her title. I must own, St. Clare, it surpris'd even me a little to find who she was, and the whole circle of females pronounced her guilty immediately; but old Villars took compassion on her, and made her withdraw: after which sentence was pass'd on her for being his mistress. But, however, St. Clare, I am happy; as I know the charming Villars, with his refined sentiments, will now, if possible, banish her from his love-sick heart. Besides, there are other schemes forming to make him hate her: but adieu! St. Clare; in a week's time we shall meet; then thou shalt know all the secret purposes of

Your

DIANA HORTON.

Miss

Miss HOWARD to Miss MEYNEL.

Elysium-Place.

THE morning succeeding the conclusion of my last letter to you, I went early into the parlour, where I found Mr. Villars alone, with my packet of letters lying on the table by him. He arose, and presented them to me: "I am convinced of your innocence, Madam," said he; "these papers are the effusions of virtuous sentiments, and I cannot express how strong my wishes are that you had met with a happier fate."

"We must resign to the will of Heaven, Sir," returned I. "If you and Mrs. Villars continue your approbation, it is all I can now hope."

“Can nothing be done for you, Madam?—Suppose I write to Lady N—— or the Earl of Walters?”——

“Ah! kind Sir, think not of it—attempt it not”—said I, weeping——
“their hearts are against me.”

“Strange!—strange!”—repeated he.
“Something should be attempted.”

Mrs. Villars entered. “Well! how are you to-day, my poor girl?—Must I call you Silena, Miss Belmont, or my Lady?—Indeed, I think you should have the latter title, as it is your right—Should not she, Mr. Villars?”

“No, no, my dear,” said he hastily;
“I will give you the reason why, when we are alone, and I have time to explain
it

it to you." He then rang the bell for the servants to attend breakfast, and desired her not before them to resume that subject.

In the midst of breakfast, a servant entered with great marks of terror. Mr. Villars demanded the reason.

"Oh! Lord, Sir, sad doings! Owen the ploughman is just come in, and says one of Mr. Clairville's people told him that as how his master had fought with Mr. Nugent this morning, and that one of them or both were dead; and he says, Madam, (nodding his head at me,) you was the cause."

"Good God grant it may not be true!" uttered I, with inexpressible terror, and fell into violent tremblings.

Mr.

Mr. Villars begged me not to be alarmed, and Mrs. Villars gave me her smelling-bottle, when the door opened, and Mr. Clairville entered.

“ I am extremely happy to see you at this juncture,” said Mr. Villars, “ as we have just received news which alarmed us on your account.—Was it true? Did you encounter Mr. Nugent this morning ?”

“ We did meet, my dear Sir, but were interrupted before any thing happened. His insolence and malevolence against this lady, who is so deserving of a happier fortune, provoked me beyond measure; but I was not permitted to chastise him as he deserved. I have insisted upon his quitting my house for ever. The day after to-morrow, it seems, they all set off for London.”

“ I should have been very unhappy, indeed,” said I, curtesying, “ if any misfortune, Sir, had happened to you on my account—doubly so, as I look on duelling as premeditated murder. Life is the gift of Heaven, and the duellist, by destroying his own or the person he encounters, offends Heaven highly. The consequence ensuing is too dreadful to reflect on.”

“ In pity, spare me,” interrupted Mr. Clairville. “ I always myself abhorred that practice; but Nugent’s villainous aspersions against virtue in distress overpowered all former objections.—I wished to chastise him: we met; he irritated me still more; and, while on the brink of fate, Lord Clandon and his servant interposed.”

I returned

I returned him thanks for his friendship, and told him I hoped his passion would never get dominion over his reason again, and incite him to commit so rash an action."

A week has now elapsed since this affair happened. Lord Clandon, his Lady, &c. &c. are gone out of the country without taking leave of Mr. Villars. Mrs Villars, indeed, would go to Shenkin-Hall to bid adieu to Lady Clandon, and fulfilled her intention without acquainting Mr. Villars, or he would not have permitted her, as he said their behaviour to me was an affront to him, since he chose to protect me. I can perceive great alteration in Mrs. Villars' behaviour to me since that visit. I hope she will soon return to her former good-nature, otherwise I am determined not
to

to remain here. Adieu! my dearest Harriot.

Miss HOWARD to Miss MEYNEL.

Elysium-Place.

ALAS! my beloved Harriot, the evil destiny which has of late attended your friend still persecutes and compels her to quit this once agreeable retreat.—Where, or with whom, will she next find a shelter? Cruel, cruel friends!—why will you permit me thus continually to be the sport of fortune? Ah! Harriot, I am unhappy—very unhappy indeed!—but I must not, will not, repine: time will reconcile me to my fate.

Mr. Villars' humanity and friendship for me prompted him to write a letter
to

to his nephew full of encomiums on my behaviour since I had been in his family, and in strong colours painted my innocence. 'This letter he ordered Lord Villars to shew Lady N——, and use the most powerful arguments to restore me to her favour, or to allow an annual stipend to preserve a woman of my family, her own sister's child, from a state of dependency. If his Lordship could not move *her* compassion, Mr. Villars desired he would go to Lord Walters, and see what could be done with him.

Lord Villars readily complied with his uncle's request, but they all agreed in the same answer, and, enraged, said, " I had chosen infamy and a dependent state, therefore might enjoy it; for they would give themselves no further trouble about me—They did not doubt but in time
Mr.

Mr. Villars would discover my hypocrisy." Thus am I still deserted. Mr. Villars, when he received Lord Villars' letter, communicated the contents to me. I had scarce returned him thanks for his kind endeavours of furthering my happiness, when Mrs. Villars rushed into the room, "Fine doings!—fine doings! indeed, Mr. Villars!—A man of your years to keep a mistress under the same roof with your wife!—Fie! Mr. Villars—Yes, Lady Di told me it was so, and Mrs. Jones, and Mrs. Davies, and Mrs. Morgan, and Mrs. Owen, and Mrs. Ellis; aye, and I believe it to be true, cruel, cruel man! otherwise you would never let a woman stay here who has been so infamous, and her own relations despise her for her wickedness.—Here nobody will come and see me on her account, and so I must live at home as if I was
as

as guilty a wretch as herself—Fie! Mr. Villars!—fie!—fie upon it!”

Mr. Villars surveyed her with the greatest surprize imaginable, and afterwards informed me he never knew her resent any thing before, and was very sorry on my account.—But to return :

I fell at her feet weeping, for though I knew she had been instigated by others to this behaviour,—knew her simplicity, yet the epithet she bestowed on me was so shocking I could not avoid being sensibly wounded. “ Let me intreat, worthy Madam,” said I, “ you will be calm: the many favours I have received from you I acknowledge, and it will never be in my power to repay them ;—yet you wrong Mr. Villars,—you wrong me ; I solemnly vow to Heaven I am as free

free from the charge brought against me as yourself.—What can I say?—I am one of the most unfortunate of women. I have no home,—no asylum—no friends! Mr. Clairville addresses me, but I am a wife, the Marquis of Melville's wife, therefore am not at liberty. Was I the infamous creature you believe me, Madam, I might reside with him; but I burn with indignation at the thought.—I will quit your house this moment, Madam, if it will afford you ease—Indeed I will.” “O Lord! no, by no means,—no no, by no means; you may stay a few days.—Are you really innocent? Well!—I don't know, it's very comical; but indeed Lady Di, Mrs. Owen, and I can't tell how many, told me you was too great with Mr. Villars;—but, however, if you are innocent, you know I can't live like a hermitess,

mitess, for they think you guilty and will not see you."

"Very true, Madam" returned I; "a few days will drive me from your sight for ever."

"I am amazed, Mrs. Villars, to see you act in this manner" said he; "where is your usual good-nature?—where your accustomed humanity?—You have surprized me beyond measure, by your barbarous behaviour to Miss Howard, while"——

"Let me beg, my kind benefactor," interrupted I, "that a stop may be put to any disagreement on my account. Mrs. Villars' opinion of me is that of the world in general,—she is not to blame. I will depart, with permission,
in

in a few days. May I, Madam, (to Mrs. Villars) stay three or four days ?”

“ Ah ! child,” said she laughing, “ as many weeks if you will. Lord ! Mr. Villars, I don’t mind ; but indeed people talk : ha, ha, ha, (looking at him) indeed people talk, Mr. Villars.”——

I withdrew to my chamber, and left them together. At dinner she behaved as usual, and soon after retired.

Mr. Villars then addressed me, “ Since the gentry around had taken such an unfavourable opinion of me, he would consent to my departure, as he thought it would conduce more to my peace of mind :” then generously offered to settle one hundred a year on me, that I might reside in some place till my friends could
be

be persuaded of my innocence, or till some event proved more favourable. You may be sure, my dear Harriot, I refused this noble offer; in my critical situation it could not consistently be accepted. I gave my reasons: he granted they were good; but entreated, that if at any time I was distressed for money, I would command his purse. He then laid the following plan, which is to be adopted.

At Bath resides a gentlewoman, who was formerly housekeeper to his father: being advanced in years, with the help of her friends she settled herself in a house, and gets a comfortable livelihood by taking boarders. As she has a great respect for Mr. Villars, and is happy to oblige him, he advises me to go to her with his recommendation, and remain
with

with her till I get a suitable place; as she has an extensive acquaintance, he doubts not but she will procure me one soon. He has written to her, my dear Harriot, and desired she would send a chaise to meet me at ——— by the turnpike, to which place he intends himself to conduct me, thereby to prevent his servants having any opportunity of asking questions of the hired postilions, or any one knowing where I am going; a caution very necessary that I may not be further exposed. He likewise has advised me to change my name again, as many from this country come to Bath, and perhaps might prevent my advancement in any family. This screening myself under fictitious names carries such an air of guilt, it wounds me sensibly; but my unhappy, my melancholy situation requires it, for if known, who

would receive me. Avelini, the name I bore with Lady N——, is the one I have now fixed on, and which Mrs. White is to receive me by. To-morrow I quit this place; Mrs. Villars seems rather in spirits at my departure. I find every one but Mr. Villars and Mr. Clairville still think me guilty. I have desired the former not to inform the latter where I am going; the reason is obvious. He is a worthy man, and I sincerely wish him happy. The kind Mrs. Gordon will bestow a recommendation on me when I need it. I have wrote a full account to her; Mr. Villars has done the same. My spirits are exceedingly depressed.

Ah, my friend, when shall I be at peace! Cruel Melville! I am sometimes almost tempted to fly to London, and
at

at his feet implore him, at least, to shield me from the dependance on a cruel unfeeling world, and to allow me some trifle to wear away my days in solitude; but that idea is quickly dispelled, after thinking on the barbarity he has practised on me: he would only add to it, and spurn me from him. Oh! my dear Harriot! how do I persecute you with a tedious recital of my misfortunes,—why will you participate them? Why should I wound so susceptible a heart? Alas! I am every way unhappy.—I must lay aside my pen to relieve both you and your unfortunate—— &c.

Miss AVELINI to Miss MEYNEL.

Bath.

I HAVE been here a week, my dear Harriot, and am quite charmed with

K 2

Mrs.

Mrs. White's tender and affectionate behaviour. She speaks with great warmth in Mr. Villars's praise, who was chiefly the means of settling her here. Finding me much dejected on my arrival, she strove with the most courteous officiousness to amuse me. Efforts so laudable deserved reward ; I endeavoured to appear composed. Her house was quite empty, but last night there arrived a lady called Mrs. Colmore, with a man and maid servants ; she has taken a house in this neighbourhood, to which she intends going soon : her health being very indifferent, she has sent previously to have it properly aired. She has been a widow, it seems, three years, and, though a middle-aged woman, has given herself up to retirement ever since the death of her husband. Mrs. White, who is very anxious to serve me, spoke to her in my behalf

behalf in hopes she might recommend me to some of her friends. She said she was not fond of admitting strangers, but she should be glad of my company to tea, with Mrs. White this afternoon, then she should be a better judge whether I honoured her recommendation. We are going to her, my dear friend, therefore will postpone concluding this epistle, till I can inform you the result of the visit.



I return, much pleased with Mrs. Colmore, my Harriot. She is a woman of elegant appearance, about five and thirty, but has the looks of an invalid. She did me the honour to approve, and said she would make it her business to enquire out an agreeable establishment for me; likewise intreated I would give

her my company constantly while at Mrs. White's, for that, being affected with lowness of spirits, she did not chuse to be quite alone if she could avoid it. She blamed herself much for rebelling so against Providence, in giving way to grief for a misfortune which was unavoidable, but she hoped time would restore her to reason and religion.—I am very sorry to find, my dear Harriot, that Lord Lorton proposes Lady Emma L—— for your cousin, but you need be under no apprehensions about a change in his heart; the object he is attached to is too amiable ever to be eradicated from thence. Perhaps in the end it may be a means of your Uncle's consenting to your union, especially when he finds how strongly Lord Duncan is attached to you. That such may
be

be the consequence will be the constant prayer of your

LOUISA AVELINI.

Miss AVEEINI to Miss MEYNEL.

Burton-Hill.

YOU will be surprised at the date, my dear Harriot; but I am now happily settled with Mrs. Colmore. I was constantly with her at Mrs. White's. A day or two before we left Bath, she invited me to reside with her, declaring, she had thoughts of it from the first time she saw me, but was willing to be better acquainted before she made proposals;—that a further acquaintance had improved her approbation into real friendship, and she should think herself

K 4

happy

happy if I would comply. I offered to give her a direction to Mrs. Gordon, but she smiled, and said a character was unnecessary; that I should have one of her, if I *chose* to write for it. You may be sure I declined it for fear of offending; but yet I should be glad to be acquainted with her family, for she is quite a stranger to Mrs. White. However, I am not in a situation to be nice, and her manner bespeaks her a woman of birth and breeding.

Burton-Hill is situated about five or six miles from Bath. Mrs. Colmore seldom ventures out but in a carriage, and then quite shut up, for she fancies every breeze brings death with it. Poor woman! it is from her extreme sensibility she is thus susceptible of a softness even unbecoming a woman. She frequently
 weeps

weeps, and recites anecdotes of her dear Mr. Colmore, till she is in hystericks. It is a great misfortune thus to lose the command of reason; yet one cannot help beholding such marks of her tenderness with admiration. When in tolerable spirits she is extremely agreeable, and naturally of a lively disposition. I sincerely wish she may soon get the better of her griefs. Adieu, my dear friend; I hope to hear more pleasing news from you soon.

Yours,

LOUISA AVELINI.

Lord VILLARS to Lord DUNCAN.

Bath.

OH! I could execrate all woman-kind, Duncan. There is no cure for

K 5

my

my disappointment and affliction.—I have been deceived by a phantom that took the form of virtue to allure me, and now my eyes are open to her perfidy.—Strange feelings ! strange infatuation ! Oh, Charles ! from henceforward life will be more intolerable, more insupportable than ever.—I shall never meet with a woman who can put on the semblance of an angel as she did, or in reality have the charms she *apparently* possessed.—Why did I credit her ?—How could I imagine her friends would all desert her, if she was not unworthy their countenance ? Why were my senses so easily captivated by her beauteous form, and those refined sentiments which delicacy itself appeared to inspire ? Lady Di Horton attacked my heart without disguise, but her known levity made it disclaim her : I refused to visit her in
London,

London, though she by repeated messages requested it. My soul was absorbed by the deceitful, too lovely Silena,—Avelini, or whatever appellation she chuses now to take; for she changes her name as often as her abode. To be the dupe of an infamous woman!—Oh! Charles, I shall go distracted.—My Uncle too was so egregiously deceived in her, he recommended her to the worthy Mrs. White at this place, and under the seal of secrecy informed me of it. Willing again to behold the idol of my heart, immediately on receipt of his letter I repaired hither, resolving to take care, when she heard of a proper place, to enquire minutely into the character of the family, &c. I came to Mrs White's, who, poor good woman! with joy informed me, the amiable Miss Avelini was happily settled with a lady

at Burton-Hill. That Mrs. Colmore had lodged with her, by which means they became acquainted, and were as intimate as if known to each other a hundred years. She thought they must have been a little acquainted before too, she said, though neither would own it. Miss had talked much of being careful to whom she went, but neither she or Mrs. Colmore enquired after each others character (well planned you see, Charles): they soon went off to Burton Hill, and the dear young Lady, she said, was very grateful to her, for her kindness, as she termed it.

I found Mrs. Colmore was an entire stranger in the neighbourhood, and determined to pay them a visit next day *en passant*, with a message from Mrs. Gordon, that I might reconnoitre a
little

little, and learn something of this stranger's family.

I returned to the inn, where I heard voices next room to me. Listening, I could hear these expressions : " Lovely creature ! after so many months absence I shall be hardly able to command my senses at the sight." Then something followed I could not hear : after which, " Be sure, said he, those fellows have the carriage ready at half past ten ; she promised faithfully not to disappoint me, and without fail would be at the garden-gate by eleven.—My dear Verneule, order supper immediately. How little did I expect such happiness ?—I thought every moment an age in cruel absence !" Verneule departed, and all was silent.

I ima-

I imagined it was some happy lover arrived at the period of his wishes. My different fate, condemned to drag on through life a hopeless passion, introduced gloomy reflexions, and I retired to bed not at all disposed for sleep. When Dumont attended me in the morning, I enquired if he knew who had been in possession of the next room to that in which I supped the preceding evening.

He answered he was ignorant who it was.

Curiosity was rather predominant; I ordered him to bid the Landlord attend me, that I might gain information.

My commands were obeyed; my landlord entered. I began my interrogations,

gations, and was almost petrified with the account he gave. It run thus. Count St. Lou was the person I overheard.—Mrs. Colmore is a woman of ill-fame, whom Nugent consented to maintain as a woman of fashion in retirement, to countenance Miss Avelini, who would not otherwise risk the loss of her reputation, but was willing privately to be his Mistress; therefore he was to pass for Colmore's nephew: but Count St. Lou coming to Bath, some letters passed, and she consented to go off with him. They actually did go last night, and left her companion and lover enraged at being thus deserted. So ended his detail of this infamous affair. The same news was communicated to Mrs. White; and Nugent, out of revenge, has published that Miss Avelini was no other than the feigned Marchio-]
ness

ness of Melville, and has escaped from him to her old lover.

Infamous beyond belief as I find her to be, I cannot eradicate her from my heart. How powerful is genuine love! Philosophy cannot subdue, Reason cannot repel it. I abhor her vices, but adore her in the similitude she appeared first to my soon-wondering eyes. Let me hear from you, my friend. Happy Duncan! the woman of your choice is deserving of it. You need never blush for confessing your passion. She has beauty, sense, and virtue. Never fear, Charles; your father must own the solidity of your judgment in a partner for life—no trivial affair, my friend, in this dissipated age, which is hastily advancing to the luxurious state that proved the downfall of Rome. But the present
agitated

agitated situation of my mind disqualifies me for moralizing. I can only add,
I am

Your unfortunate

VILLARS

From the Same to the Same.

Bath.

I WAS extremely displeased, my dear Charles, at your levity in the beginning of your last concerning the charming Avelini, thinking you was seriously advising me to gain her for a mistress—the more so, as you are well acquainted with my sentiments: but a ray of hope dawned when you informed me of your Harriot's distress upon the news in town of her Adelaide's elopement, and further, the note she honoured me with in favour of
her

her friend. But then I reflected that she might have imposed on your lovely cousin, and was still miserable. To be thoroughly convinced, I resolved to take your advice, and, if possible, bribe the truth from Colmore. Nugent is gone to London; Mrs. Colmore is to follow in a few days; I therefore waited on her, told her my name; said, for particular reasons, I should be glad to know how long she had known Miss Avelini, &c. then, putting on a gay air, offered to reward her for her intelligence.

“Why, my Lord, as to that part of the story,” said she, “it’s of little purpose; but, if you wish to see her, I can inform you where she now is.”

“Where?”

“Oh!

"Oh! the premium—the premium, my Lord."

"What is your demand?"

"Why, Nugent has used me rather scurvily, therefore I've done with him—Let me see—Excuse me now, my Lord, I must consider a little.—To-morrow morning I shall be at Bath, and without fail will call and settle this affair with your Lordship—You may be assured I will not disappoint you, for my own sake."

I depended on her word, and am now, Duncan, in immediate expectation of her arrival.



Colmore disappointed me, and sent
me

me word particular business prevented her—that she could not find time to speak to me for three days. I supposed she had sent to consult her agent, therefore went to Burton Hill, but she positively would not see me. She has now sent word that she will come in half an hour. She is better than her word—She is arrived.



I am happy and miserable by turns—I must immediately fly to the relief of my angelic Adelaide—What a devil is Lady Di?—But I am so incoherent, Charles, thou wilt think me mad. Let me write methodically, if I can.

Colmore entered, with a letter in her hand, and anger in her countenance.
 “Nugent has flung me finely, indeed,”
 said

said she; "but I will be revenged on him. For fifty pieces, my Lord, I will inform you of every thing concerning Miss Avelini."

"Why, it is uncertain whether I shall gain by your information; twenty is all I will give," said I, carelessly.

She agreed to it, and proceeded.

"I think I may depend on your honour, my Lord, for payment; therefore I will begin — The history of my life, or connections, before this affair with Mr. Nugent, will not answer the present purpose to recite. He came to me about the time Miss Avelini first went to Bath, and, laying out the plan which has been put into practice, desired I would execute it, to get her into his power, whom
otherwise

otherwise he could not make comply with his wishes. As I had been an actress, I could personate any character, therefore he fixed on me for an assistant, and if I succeeded would give me two hundred pounds. I agreed to it; Burton-Hill was taken, and I prepared to set out, when I received a note from a lady of fashion, a friend of Nugent, desiring to speak to me before I went. Much surprized at the invitation, I immediately complied with it. She received me with a friendly shake by the hand. 'I am acquainted with the business you are going upon, my dear Mrs. ———,' said she; 'but may I place confidence in you, for I have a favour to request?'

"You may certainly command any thing, Madam," said I, "not inconsistent with my friend Nugent's arrangement."

‘Mankind deceive us, my dear Mrs. —,’ said she, with a smile, ‘and we should, in turn, deceive them. Will you—will you,’ repeated she, looking at me stedfastly, ‘enter into my plan?—May I place confidence in you?—You shall not go unrewarded, and the nobleman in whose cause I would engage your services, I’m sure, is very generous.”

“Oh! Madam, you may depend on my secrecy and obedience,” returned I.

“In short, my Lord, after a few more promises of compliance, she unbosomed herself. Her scheme was to the following effect:

“Being unacquainted herself with Count St. Lou, and wanting, for particular reasons, to put Miss Avelini into his power again, who had once been his mistress,

mistress, she begged I would wait on him with an information of the scheme Nugent had in train, and tell him, if he still wished for the possession of Miss Belmont, to be at or near Bath in readiness, where, for a handsome gratuity, I would surrender her up to him.

“ I waited on the Count, who was in raptures when I informed him of my kind intention, and promised to reward me. Returning, with an account of my success, to the lady, she presented me a hundred pound note, and intreated I would conceal her knowledge of this affair from every one. You know the manner I got her into my power. Count St. Lou was at a loss for a house in some retired place to convey her to: on enquiry, I found that — Park was not at too great a distance, and had been uninhabited

uninhabited many years on account of an idle report of its being visited by apparitions. I persuaded him to desire the loan of it from the owner, who would with great pleasure surrender it for a time, in hopes of its regaining credit. He happily succeeded, my Lord, and sent servants there to wait his arrival. In the mean time, he remained at Bath *incog.* two or three days before Nugent's arrival at Burton Hill. I talked to Miss Belmont of a nephew I expected, of whom my pretended Mr. Colmore was very fond. She happened to be in my dressing-room when he came, and I sent for her down. The agony she experienced at sight of him was visible, but I overlooked it; and he, seemingly to carry on the deceit, addressed her as an intimate stranger. She soon found means to withdraw. I followed her to her cham-

218 THE MUTABILITY OF

ber, and found her in tears. Counterfeiting surprize, I demanded the reason; she would not answer; when, affecting to be moved with her distress, I on my knees intreated her pardon; owned that I had long had an illicit amour with Mr. Nugent, and was subservient to his pleasures; that to oblige him I had got her into my power, but that her amiable manner and innocence had made me repent of it; therefore, if she would absolve me in the eyes of Mr. Nugent from being privy to her escape, I would that night let her free. She returned me thanks with tears of joy and a thousand blessings. I then told her I would write to Bath, and order a post-chaise to be at the garden-gate at eleven at night to convey her to Mrs. White's. It is impossible to express what gratitude she displayed. I then wrote to Count St.

Lou,

Lou, who came at the appointed period, but rode at a distance on horseback till he should find a convenient opportunity to enter the chaise after she was in it. I made her write a note, as if to me, and leave it on her table, informing me she had decyphered my character, and happily found means to escape from mine and Mr. Nugent's power. Accordingly, the next morning, when Mr. Nugent and I had got to the parlour for breakfast, a servant was sent to Miss Avelini's room, who returned, asserting she was not there. I then made my colleague go up with me, and we found the note on the table, which he read, to his very great mortification. He stamped, raved, and blamed me for not taking greater care. News came from some country-fellows they saw Miss Avelini go off with Count St. Lou from Burton-Hill. Some of the

Count's servants, in parting from the inn, had divulged it, and thus it became public. Out of revenge for his disappointment, Nugent exposed her as much as possible. Giving me a hundred-pound note, he left me, swearing, that, as his scheme had miscarried, he would pay me no more. You came; I then wrote to know if he would pay the other hundred. He positively refused; therefore, for his mean behaviour, I was determined to gratify your Lordship." Thus ended this infamous woman's narration.

"Pray, Mrs. Colmore, was not this lady of fashion Lady Di Horton?" said I.

"Oh! my Lord," said she, "I must not expose a lady of quality—she bound me to secrecy—But my hopes from her are at an end—It *was* her Ladyship, indeed."

"Diabolical

"Diabolical woman!" exclaimed I.

"Ha! ha! ha!" said she; "a little innocent friendship for St. Lou, and perhaps too great a *tendresse* for Nugent."

"Very true," returned I, seeming to credit her. "I am obliged to you, Mrs. Colmore, for information.—You think, then, I may certainly find Miss Belmont at — Park."

"Most certainly," said she.

After paying her the destined sum, she departed, to pursue her infamous practices, and I sat down to write to thee, Charles. I have ordered my carriage and servants to be ready. If possible, I will in disguise see the lovely Adelaide, and know from her own lips if she will

trust herself under my protection back to Mrs. White's.—I have ten thousand unspeakable anxieties concerning her—Who knows——But, adieu!

Yours,

VILLARS.

Miss AVELINI to Miss MEYNEL.

Bath.

IT is impossible to express my sensibility of your kindness to me, my dear Harriot. Your interpositions in my favour to the worthy Lord Villars have had the desired effect, and I am restored in my innocence to Mrs. White again. I have suffered much for putting myself under the protection of a stranger; it will make me more cautious for the future. The infamous

infamous Colmore acted her part with such adroitness, that I had no suspicion of her not being the person she pretended. Besides, I had no idea that any man would give himself so much trouble and expence to ruin the innocence of an unfortunate young woman. Before Mr. Nugent arrived, she talked of a nephew, of whom she was in daily expectation. Good God! my Harriot, how greatly was I shocked when it proved to be Nugent! Artfully pretending to conceal his knowledge of me from Colmore, he addressed me as a stranger. I trembled exceedingly, and withdrew to my chamber; there I burst into a flood of tears, and concluded that my protection from Mrs. Colmore was at an end. In the midst of my anxiety she entered—seemed surprized at finding me weeping—then changed her tone, and at my feet de-

manded pardon for having inveigled me. With well-feigned tears she lamented having become a victim to her unhappy passion for Mr. Nugent; owned that, rather than bear the unspeakable misery of losing sight of him for ever, she had so far debased herself as to be the pandar of his intrigues with others; but that my artless and innocent manner struck her so much, she would run the hazard of displeasing her dear Nugent for ever, should it come to his knowledge, rather than injure me.—I with eagerness seized hold of the first hint of escaping, and asked her if I could not go that night. She said, yes; that she would write letters to Bath, and order a chaise for me at eleven at night; but she had one favour to beg, which was, that I would write a note, and leave behind me, importing I had found means

to escape, and happily should be out of her power before that reached her hands.

Such a note would, she said, exculpate her in the eyes of her darling Nugent.

I complied, and wrote the billet. Night advanced: I was in great anxiety, lest

Nugent should detect us; but, with her consent, complaining of a head-ach, I

kept my room. Luckily I brought but a few cloaths from Bath. She told me

I might pack them in my portmanteau, and take them with me. At eleven

o'clock we carried it with us into the garden, and, going to the back-gate,

found a chaise in waiting. She sent one of the men to fetch my luggage from

the garden; and a man wrapped up in a great coat, on horseback, came to her.

It was so very dark, I could not distinguish his features. He whispered her,

and seemed to put something into her

hand. She then turned to me, "This is the man of the inn, who is owner of the chaise," said she; "I could depend on him, therefore begged he would come to see you safe, in case you should be pursued." "I am much obliged to both you and him," returned I; "may you end your days in virtue and happiness: you will find, Madam, there is no happiness independent of virtue." She thanked me, and, pressing my hand, said she would hasten back to Mr. Nugent, and keep him in conversation.—Away she flew.

I got into the chaise. It was very disagreeable to travel alone on so dark a night, but the shortness of the way made me dispel fear. The horses seemed to fly: the time I thought must be elapsed that we might have got to Bath—I grew uneasy—

uneasy—The chaise stopped in a bye-road, and a gentleman, descending from a horse, entered it—I cried out in terror—The postilions heeded not, but went on as hard as possible—I imagined it was Nugent, therefore began to upbraid him, and intreat that he would set me free, when that I immediately knew to be Count St. Lou almost overpowered my senses.

“My ever-adorable Adelaide Belmont, recover your fear and surprise,” said he; “it is not Nugent, it is your faithful St. Lou, who still adores you, and has by Colmore’s means rescued you from that man’s power.”

“And whither are you conducting me, my Lord?” said I.

“To a safe place, my charmer, where I hope you will listen to my vows—vows, Adelaide, which are founded on esteem and honour. You surely cannot condemn me, lovely Miss Belmont; your friends approve my suit; and, notwithstanding your affair with Melville, I am still willing to give you my name and fortune.”

Being so unhappily situated, my dear Harriot, for once, contrary to my conscience, I endeavoured to make use of dissimulation. “Why, my Lord,” returned I, “did you not at Mrs. White’s make me acquainted with the continuance of your favourable sentiments? Did you imagine I could only be gained by force? Alas! you do not yet know me; I can never be *compelled* to give my hand: add not another wound to my
fame;

fame; you only heighten my resentment. Time, and your endeavours when I was my own mistress, might have performed wonders."

"Ah! Madam, forgive me," returned he; "I dare not trust you; a few hours will convey us to our destined abode, and there I hope to retrieve all; you will accept my hand and become Countess St. Lou.—I dare not trust you from my sight; indeed, my angel, I dare not."

"Neither will I proceed further," returned I, striving to open the chaise door. He prevented it, and held me fast: I struggled, when fear, anxiety, and horror encreasing, I fainted.

As

As soon as I recovered my senses, it was day-light, and I found we were in a small park; the chaise almost flew, and we arrived at a small castle, whose very looks denounced the miseries of despair:—they assisted me out of the chaise, and we entered a hall of immense height and proportionate gloom, which conveyed an additional horror to the soul. We were received in a parlour not more calculated to cheer the spirits, by a woman who seemed to officiate as a house-keeper; she brought tea and coffee immediately, and said she had prepared well-aired beds. I insisted that I would not retire to any chamber—on my knees intreated the Count to let me depart, and said I would then receive his visits at Mrs. White's: I said any thing, in short, that I might deliver myself from his power; but in vain. Being quite exhausted,

exhausted, he and the woman urged me to take some refreshment. At last I complied, in hopes of keeping the family up, to escape from his presence. I at length agreed to retire to a chamber, where, after locking myself in, I in my cloaths threw myself on the bed to rest my wearied limbs. At three in the afternoon the woman came to beg I would rise to dinner. I told her I did not chuse any,—she answered, that the Count insisted on my coming down, or he would come to my chamber, to avoid which, I was obliged to acquiesce. My soul was in agonies—Could it be otherwise? I was in the power of an infamous man, and had no means to extricate myself, nor any friend that I knew who was able to relieve me. I shed tears all the time he was dining, and though he tried all in his power to make me taste some of the
the

the delicacies he had provided, I took only a bit of bread and half a glass of wine, after which I begged leave to retire, but was not permitted. He then made use of the most forcible arguments to persuade me to accept his hand. I assured him, in the most solemn manner, I could not bestow myself on him, as I was wife to Melville. He said, granting that to be the case, the Marquis had deserted me;—I could not prove my marriage, therefore it would be the wisest method to accept his offer, as such a measure bid fair for re-establishing my character, and putting a period to my misfortunes. Ah! my dear friend, how poignantly did I suffer while this conversation continued.—At last he grew impatient, and said he would make himself master of my person, if I would not consent to be his wife; adding, he could

could not live without me. My terror increased,—I locked myself in my room at night, and, not daring to undress, I threw myself on the bed, and passed the night in prayers, tears, and misery unspeakable. The days he forced me to stay with him, and all means of escaping were impossible. Often I used to sit an hour at a time without answering him. Pen and ink one day being on the table, I marked down the following reflexion, which then obtruded itself:

“Hark! the shrill trumpet sounds!
Our God appears triumphant, and his
effulgence makes Nature shrink. My-
riads of angels hover round his throne,—
the elements in flames confess his power;—
the terrestrial globe dissolves, and sin-
ners fain would flee from his displeasure.
Warned by that faithful monitor, impe-
rial

rial conscience, they anticipate their doom, and trace with shame the retrospect of their past conduct. The virtuous with extacy behold his glory, while he receives *them* to eternal bliss and never-fading joys. Why then should deceitful wicked pleasures allure our hearts, and tempt them from the way that leads to happiness and Heaven? Oh! why forego all heavenly hopes and wander thus astray? Though narrow is the path the virtuous tread, yet easy the ascent to willing minds who will by grace and faith be led. To them who strive for mastery, a calm tranquility succeeds, spite of misfortune's dire train of woe. Happy earnest of sublime eternal joys! Who then would sink in earthly fading pleasure? Who grasp a moment's bliss for misery eternal?"

I had

I had wrote thus far when the Count snatched the paper from me. "Pardon me, Miss Belmont," said he, "I must peruse the effects of your pen."

"The subject is too serious to claim your attention, my Lord," returned I.

After having read it. "Can a woman of your sense, my lovely Miss Belmont," said he gravely, "be really so fascinated by priestcraft, and place faith on revealed religion?" "Does your Lordship acknowledge the existence of a God?" returned I warmly.

"Most certainly, Miss Belmont; but a Superior Being who bestowed passions on us, would never punish us for making

ing use of those pleasures *Nature* points out."

"You had better made use of the word *instinct*, my Lord; for vice levels mankind with brutes. Do you approve rapine and murder as pleasures, which *Nature* (as you term it) points out to mankind?"

"Oh! horrible, Madam! No, certainly, *Nature* never points that out; it is madness causes the execution of it."

"So the vices your Lordship has no taste for, you term madness. Ah! my Lord, how you deceive yourself! The premeditated murderer proceeds as calmly on with his design, as does your Lordship endeavour to effect my ruin."

His

His opinion on revealed religion is too shocking to repeat, my dear Harriot,— I entreated him to drop the subject ; it was with difficulty I could prevail : the inspired writings he rejected intirely, and called them tales to amuse children and weak minds.

I asked him if he thought it inconsistent with Omnipotence to perform the miracles contained in Scripture.

He agreed it was not, but that a Superior Being would not degrade himself so much, as to be familiar with man in his present state, and disallowed the divinity of our Saviour ; and likewise the whole Scripture.

I asked him, “ Why, as he believed in a God, he should think it inconsistent

238 THE MUTABILITY OF

ent that power should reveal himself to man, and point out the means of adoring and pleasing him, with proper laws to bind society?"

"Such a revelation" he again said, "was unnecessary; that nature and instinct were undoubtedly designed our guides, and self-preservation would make us convinced laws were necessary to general order."

"Ah! my Lord, but though self-preservation after the fall, might convince man laws were necessary; yet, without so divine a Law-giver, such wise ones could not have been instituted."

"Well, well," said he, "my lovely Miss Belmont, you are rather hard on me,

me; perhaps if you would receive my hand, you might gain a convert." He pursued the hateful subject of his passion. Thus in wretchedness did I spend my days at ——— park.

I had one evening retired to my chamber at ten o'clock, under a pretence of illness, and sat enjoying gloomy reflexions, when Molly, the chambermaid entered with joy in her countenance. Looking behind her, to be certain nobody was near, she exclaimed, "Upon my word, Madam, there is a woman below can tell fortunes purely,—you can't think what things she has told me: I am to be very rich, and married in half a year; and she begged me to tell you, that for a bit of silver she will tell you every thing that ever did or can happen.

happen to you. Do, Madam, try her ; indeed she does it cleverly.

I could scarce retain my countenance at the girl's earnestness, and with a smile told her, that I expected no promising futurity in this world ; therefore would dispense with the good woman's attendance. Molly was disconcerted and retired, but soon returned, and begged she might introduce the woman, who was very urgent to see me. As most of the strolling tribe are very artful, and addicted to what they are pleased to call gallantry, and still more to that idol, gold, a ray of hope entered my benighted heart, on the suggestion, that bribery might effect my escape. " Let her approach, Molly," returned I with a smile. " Yes, Madam" said she, " but you must not be *afraid* of being alone with

with her, for she does not disclose her skill before any witnesses. She must have you all to herself."

"Oh! very well," returned I, "but be sure to remain in the next room."

The Sybil soon after appeared, Molly retired, and an awkward courtesy succeeded from the Oracle. I was surprised to find she remained silent, as those people are very voluble, and therefore began to question her how long she had pursued her present vocation. A voice, not altogether unknown to me, answered, "Some time, Madam; but do you wish your present situation to undergo an alteration? Perhaps I may prognosticate some disagreeable events which lie concealed in the womb of time.—You wish not to be separated from Count St.

Lou—his views are honourable—he will marry you ?” “ I cannot marry him, good woman” returned I, “ as I am already married ; were I not, his principles and sentiments are not calculated to raise any esteem in my breast.”

“ Ah ! Madam,” said she, “ will you permit me to display your future fate ?”

“ It is out of your power,” good woman,” returned I ; “ the mysteries of futurity are hid from all human foresight ! Shall feeble mortals then pretend to fathom them ? It was not for such a purpose I permitted you to enter my apartment. I was well convinced your associates have art sufficient to delude weak minds.—I am an unwilling prisoner here,” said I, weeping ; “ a longer stay may be of fatal consequence, as I am in the
hands

hands of a man who disregards all laws, divine and human. Assist me, dear good woman, in escaping, and I will recompence you with ten guineas. What say you?"

“ Ah ! Madam,” returned she, “ my life shall be spent in your service—Forgive me ;—I am not what I seem.”

“ You are not,” said I;—“ Who are you then?” I stared hard at her, and bringing the candle nearer, found, to my great surprize, it was Lord Villars.

“Is it possible!” exclaimed I in the greatest palpitatio*n* imaginable—“Is it really Lord Villars I see?”

“ It is, Madam ; pardon my disguise ;
it was necessary for me to intrude into
M 2 your

your presence to be certain whether a release would be agreeable to you, and to concert means for your escape. Mrs. White came to * * * * with me, and is there waiting at the Inn, to know the result of my visit, and return back with you to Bath if our stratagem succeeds, as I thought a woman of reputation being with you would be eligible. I have not time to disclose more at present," added he. "How shall we proceed, Madam?"

"My Lord" said I, "it is many miles from * * * *; by what means did you reach me?"

"On horseback, Madam; Dumont waits with the horses at the outside of the gate now."

"Is

“Is it impossible, my Lord, for me to go with you to-night” returned I?
“Molly’s credulity may be easily caught, and there is no one else to fear.”

We then concerted that Molly should be called, and desired secretly to attend us to the end of the park, where we were to dig for a pot of money and jewels, which was to be divided among us.

The girl, who was quite as weak as we could wish, readily consented. At twelve o’clock, after locking my chamber, we descended through a subterraneous passage attended by the girl to the park;—to carry on the farce, we took a spade with us; it was extremely cold, but we walked fast, till at last we

saw Dumont with the horses. How our hearts bounded !

“ Now, Molly,” said Lord Villars, “ take your choice ; you must either be left tied to this gate, or go behind this man to ———, where you shall receive five guineas for your trouble.”

“ Oh ! Lord,” said she, trembling, “ for God’s sake let me go with you, for I shall be killed if I remain here.” Accordingly she was seated behind Dumont, and I behind Lord Villars ; we galloped as fast as possible to ——— ; Molly begged to remain with me, and entered the house with Dumont, while my Lord threw aside his disguise.

Mrs. White received me with the greatest joy, and heartily congratulated me

me on my escape. Lord Villars then entered. We took some refreshment, and retired to rest.

The next day we arrived at Bath. Words were insufficient to express my gratitude to Mrs. White and to Lord Villars, especially the latter, who behaved in a very delicate manner. Ah! Harriot, it is necessary for my peace of mind to be ever banished from his presence. I intreated, as a favour, he would visit Mrs. White seldom as possible while I remained there, as the world had already too much apparent reason to misjudge my conduct from my misfortunes. He assured me, however unhappy such an absence must make him, he would comply with it; and he keeps his word. How few of his sex are equal to such severe trials of principle under similar

circumstances!—Surely it cannot be criminal in me to say this!—I should be ungrateful not to acknowledge his merit. Mrs. White does all in her power to exculpate me from the seeming guilt of my flight with the Count. The people here divide in parties on my account; some imagine me innocent, some otherwise: but, as I think it will be prejudicial to this worthy woman for me to remain with her, I am determined soon to quit Bath. My intention is to board for three or four months at some farm, that I may if possible regain my tranquillity. By that time, perhaps, Violetta and Melville may be parted: if so, I will throw myself at his feet, and intreat him to save me for the future from dependence. If he will not listen to me, I must again seek for a suitable retreat.

I intend,

I intend, in this rural concealment, to take the name of Mont; it is part of my maiden name, therefore I have a right to it: and, as I have been unfortunate in passing for a single woman, I will acknowledge having a husband abroad, who has left me rather distressed—a story similar to my real fate. Adieu! my beloved friend; I will write soon again: at present I must lay down the pen; and I suppose you are weary of reading my long epistle, therefore again farewell.

Miss AVELINI to Miss MEYNEL.

Bath.

TOMORROW, my ever-dear Harriot, I quit the kind, the tender Mrs. White; and half an hour since I took a final leave of the too amiable Lord Villars.

M 5

My

My tears still flow—pardon my guilty confession—they are the tears of friendship—the tears of ——. Oh! Harriot, it is necessary, highly necessary, we should part for ever—Absence will alleviate our mutual distress, and put a period to an esteem which interviews would heighten. I will write no more on the subject—banish him my memory—never name him—and, lest I should be *too* grateful, become guilty of *ingratitude*. The solitary journey of life, which, if calculated by years, to me, who am but young, must be of long duration, seems dreadful. Alas! Harriot, I must lay aside my pen—Why will you claim a wretch's correspondence, who can only throw a gloom upon your happier destiny!



I am

I am going, my dear Harriot, to a friend of Mrs. White's, who resides at Howel-Wood, in ——shire. Her name is Hall. Her husband farms a small estate of his own. She is a very amiable woman, I am told, and has often wished for an agreeable boarder, as company, the place being very solitary (the more suitable to my wishes). Mrs. White wrote, to ask her if she continued in the same mind, and spoke in favour of me. She soon returned an answer, that she should be very happy to receive me. Thither I am going, my dear friend, under the appellation of Mrs. Mont.

Perhaps it may be an improper scheme to exhaust part of my very small remains; but next summer I must endeavour either to address the Marquis's compassion, or through the inquiries of

this family introduce myself somewhere. What will become of me! My spirits are oppressed beyond expression. When will my misfortunes arrive at a period! Lord Villars' complaints, too, have affected me much. Though he derived no hopes from my friendship, he said, he would cherish me in his remembrance. Oh! let him be happy, righteous Heaven!—let him obliterate from his memory the unhappy wretch that at present is doomed to disturb his peace—let him believe me unworthy esteem—any thing, sooner than be thus wretched! Intreat Lord Duncan to use all the power he is master of to make his friend forget me. It is criminal for us not to strive against a passion that must offend Heaven. Oh! I will tear him from my heart, or die in the attempt. Adieu!

Lord

Lord VILLARS to Lord DUNCAN.

Bath.

THE lovely Adelaide has left me, Duncan, almost in a state of distraction. The more reason I find to admire her, the more miserable I am. She has left me to drag on a miserable existence in endless banishment. Before her departure, I went to wish her happiness. I could not command my passion—I could not help uttering complaints at my unhappy fate—I could not help saying I adored her, hopeless as I knew it to be, and expected only in return a friendship, which the most rigid virtue could not condemn—that my sentiments for her were founded on the purity of her manners, and caused an esteem never to be erased.

“Alas!”

“Alas! my Lord,” answered she, blushing, and the tears standing in her lovely eyes, “why will you permit your reason to be so overpowered by a sentiment, which, if encouraged, must render you culpable?—Forget me, my Lord—my misfortunes have been sufficiently numerous already without undergoing still more—the reflection of a person’s being unhappy on my account, to whom I am under such obligations, must imbitter the little share of tranquility I might otherwise enjoy—Promise me that you will obliterate from your memory her whose prayers shall always be for your happiness, it will afford me the greatest pleasure that I can in my present circumstances feel.”

My answer was, Charles, “that I was sorry she requested the only thing I found impossible

impossible to grant—that I could not allow it a deviation from the path of rectitude to esteem one so amiable—my friendship for her must continue to the period of my existence.”

She was extremely affected; intreated me to leave her; and, if possible, comply with her request—her last request. She hoped we should never meet more; and that absence, and a more agreeable object, would fix my happiness. So saying, she hastily retired—she forsook me for ever.

The distraction, the pangs, the horror, I experienced, imagine if you can, Charles—Dreadful!—dreadful indeed!

I am going to London—Yet what shall I do there, Duncan?—The hurry
and

and dissipation going forwards there is hateful to me—I cannot plunge into folly. I come, Charles, to pour out my affliction in thy friendly bosom—to sometimes hear from your beloved Harriot the situation and health of her too amiable and unfortunate friend. Adieu! In three days I shall see you.

VILLARS.

Mrs. MONT to Miss MEYNEL.

Howel-Wood.

THIS house, my dear Harriot, is so situated, that it increases the gloom which I was fondly persuaded it would in some measure remove; yet peaceful minds might approve it. It stands at the entrance of a wood several miles long; pleasant meadows, with a pretty rivulet,
mix.

mix in the prospect: but Howel-Wood is my favourite walk—there I enjoy a luxury of sorrow—there I meditate on the folly and guilt of not resigning myself with submission and cheerfulness to the dispensation of Providence. I hope the combat will end, as I wish, in a humble resignation to that Being who ordains all things for the wisest purposes. How stubborn is frail nature! how hard to be conquered by reason! and how are our two wills constantly at war with each other!

Mrs. Hall is a very agreeable, sensible woman; and I think the time I shall spend here will be passed as well as is consistent with the painful feelings I have upon me. The parsonage-house is about a mile off, which is their nearest and chief place of visiting. The clergyman,

man, whose name is Wollar, is a very worthy man, and has a decent, good-natured, notable woman for his wife. At the farthest extent of this wood resides, in the summer, a Mrs. Mordaunt: Report says she is an old lady of excellent qualities. Mrs. Hall is much with her when Mrs. Mordaunt is there, and says my additional company will, she is persuaded, be very acceptable. If she proves as truly formed for friendship as my landlady says she is, I should be very happy if she would receive me for a companion—But I must not too soon entertain vain hopes—Time may, however, prove more favourable than I expect—my tranquility may be restored—though I must never flatter myself that I shall regain the full friendship and protection of my relations—a thing impossible!—Hard thought!—Adieu! Harriot.—

When

When shall I cease tiring you with my complaints?

Miss MEYNEL to Mrs. MONT.

London.

SHALL I tell you news, my dear Adelaide? Lord Villars is arrived in town. The coquets all envy you, and would with pleasure, I believe, undergo your misfortunes to be possessed of your beauty. I will add a little more: Count Dismallo, who was, it seems, almost deprived of his adventuring spirit by the grief he experienced at your escape, at last roused himself, returned to Bath, and waited on good Mrs. White before your Quixotic Villars had taken his final leave of her. It is needless to tell you, my dear girl, what bribery, &c. &c. the
Count

Count endeavoured to make use of to overcome that worthy creature's integrity, and learn whither you was gone. You may be as certain she was proof against all his offers. He called you all the charming creatures and endearing names he could collect together in the English language; said he would do all in his power to restore your reputation, for he respected you more than ever, and really believed you the Marquis's wife. Finding his inquiries vain, he came flying post to London, where, as report ushers forth, he waited on your old *friend* Colmore—(don't be angry)—made her a handsome present, and from her got permission to make use of Lady Di Horton's name as it deserved: after which he made it his business to attend several routs, where he made public how he became acquainted with you at Paris

—the

—the rebukes you gave him—the Marquis's *kind* assistance (as he then thought it) and friendship in striving to make you return *his* passion—the scheme of bringing him into your bed-chamber at Lord Walters' house—and the guilt of his entering into it from the flattering hope of becoming in possession of you afterwards—his being but just put into the room when Lord Walters and the Marquis arrived at it, the latter being determined you should not undergo real violation. In short, he has stated facts as they really were, displayed Nugent and Lady Di Horton's illicit practice, with his last treatment of you, and your escape. The world is wondering—Several gentlemen have been to Colmore, who has satisfied them of the truth, and the part she acted, declaring she believed you strictly virtuous; for which declaration

ration Lord Villars has secretly recompensed her since. It is publicly known that he released you from St. Lou; and those ladies who admire him are jealous of you to desperation.

Lady Di Horton appears in public as usual—Her passion for Lord Villars is known. Notwithstanding her assurance, she is enraged, and sighs in secret for being thus exposed. Nugent is invisible at present—it is not known where he is.

The Marquis of Melville is highly incensed against St. Lou, who, he says, blinded by his passion for you, has been incited by your art to thus attack his character. Violetta is out of spirits—The Marquis, it is said, is tired of her, and flights her—She rages, storms, and

VOWS

vows revenge—He fears her—smiles—
they are reconciled : but she is enraged
much against St. Lou. Thus are things
situated at present.

Take courage, Adelaide ; who knows
but Providence may be at work in your
favour ? I protest all this bustle has put
me into spirits, because I find you have
more friends than enemies, and hope that
some of your relations may inquire into
this affair. Villars has so good a heart,
I am charmed with him. But in the
midst of this seeming levity, my dear
Adelaide, my heart is not at ease. My
uncle torments Lord Duncan concerning
Lady Emma. To award the dreadful
blow, he renews the excuse of a foreigner
being mistress of his affections. I fear
Lord Lorton begins to suspect his son's
partiality for me, Adelaide—I think I
can

can perceive a storm impending. Oh folly! folly! What signifies the loss of a lover? another will soon succeed him. But, then, his merit—his uncommon merit!—Oh! ridiculous!—What a silly creature I am? May you, my dear creature, have more enlivening ideas in Howel-Wood. The first agreeable news shall with pleasure be imparted by

Your affectionate

HARRIOT MEYNEL.

Lord VILLARS to Mrs. MONT.

MADAM,

MY unhappy friend Duncan, being in too much anxiety and affliction to attempt taking pen in hand, has requested me to inform you that he has lost his beloved Harriot. He imagines Lord and Lady Lorton have had her privately conveyed

veyed from hence, but he can gain no knowledge where to, and is miserable. As he supposes that she will not be at liberty to write to you, Madam, he thought it was necessary to acquaint you of her exile, that you might not be rendered perhaps more uneasy by imbibing a notion that she slighted you. I feel much for them both, and am shocked to find parents so cruel as to separate two lovers who appear formed for each other. But I will say no more, as I am well convinced it will only increase the affliction of a heart so compassionate as yours. Ah! Madam, may Heaven interpose in yours and the amiable Miss Meynel's favour! May you both be happy, whatever is the fate of

Your unalterable friend,

And respectful humble servant,

VILLARS.

VOL. II.

N

Miss

Miss MEYNEL to Mrs. MONT.

MOST certainly I have been conveyed away in a clandestine manner. But alas! Adelaide, my adventure will make no figure in history, my ravisher and companion being an old woman. How mortifying to one's vanity is it!—I shall not even be envied,—and oh, cruel! no beautiful swain to keep up my spirits, by putting me in remembrance of my all-powerful charms. O! it was enough to plunge me in vapours and despair.

My wise uncle and aunt, God bless them! (though I am a little in wrath against them for serving me so scurvy a trick,) at last had the wonderful sagacity to discover their son Charles was too fond of their niece Harriot, which undoubtedly

edly must be the reason of his flighting Lady Emma :—a provocation beyond endurance; therefore, while I was out one evening, had taken care to have my cloaths packed up. When I came home at ten, my dear Duncan being absent, they pushed me into a coach and six, with an old woman and her maid, and away we flew fast as the horses could carry us. Mark though, Lady Lorton acquainted me, in a few words, with her reason for thus sending me into exile, and assured me, soon as Lord Duncan was married, she would receive me again to her affection. I murmured to no purpose, and was sent off as I told you before.

This old dame's name is Harpur : she lives in a frightful dismal house, surrounded by yews and willows, whose

different forms recal Ovid's Metamorphoses to my ideas, and make me sometimes ready to bemoan the fate of unhappy lovers converted into evergreens by the supposed enchantress of this dreary mansion ;—a pleasant fancy to keep up my spirits for a few moments : but where this place is situated I can't tell—what country, a secret—neither should have had an opportunity of informing you I still exist, if it had not been for a good-natured old lady that is often here. She knew the reason of my being brought hither ; therefore I complained of my extreme unhappy situation, in being deprived of the correspondence of an old friend, a school-fellow, who would be much afflicted at not hearing from me—that I wished to inform her I was in health.

“ Well,

“Well, well! Miss,” said she, clapping her hand on mine, “if you will swear,—mind, you must *swear*, that you will not write any message to your lover,—I will forward it to your friend.”

I readily promised her, Adelaide; for since I am thus banished, I may as well try the extent of my swain’s constancy; though I fear a little, for men have fickle hearts. I then asked her if my friend might not return an answer to me, under cover to her.

“No!” that could not be, she said, as, if I knew, or you did, what country I was in, my lover might be informed of it, but that you might direct to her, under cover, to Mrs. Blondel, at London, and I should have it safe. For Heaven’s sake, write soon, Adelaide, (I in-

N 3

close

close a proper direction,) for I am almost melancholy, in a truly dismal situation. I am continually watched or locked up, and Mrs. Harpur is a rank methodist, full of hymns and canting prayers; a proper person for a persecutor. What a disgrace to religion is their sect!—in reality a pest to society, as they disregard moral duties. Murder, theft, and lying, are cancelled in their opinion by faith,—a faith without repentance, which wings their flight to Heaven.—But, my dear friend, my own affairs had very near made me forget yours. The very night I was cruelly snatched from my Charles, —“Oh! fool that I am!”—Well, that night I was informed Lady Di Horton had gained a new lover, a foreigner of title, who is exceedingly handsome, and whom she is as much delighted with, as her once darling Villars; an object of such superior

superior worth! Several surmized it would be a match; but I could not gain his appellation, as the Adonis has not appeared much in public yet; but I doubt not he will soon be well known, as she will compel him to attend her steps to gratify her vanity. Violetta and the Marquis are in turn enraged at each other—yet he has not the spirit to discard her, as it must cast so dark a cloud over his character, though most people now think him guilty. I flatter myself time will work wonders, and that your virtue and innocence will appear with redoubled lustre. It cannot be otherwise—She must weary him out; at least a new object will arise, and cause her to experience part of the torture she has inflicted on you.—He will grow weary of her arbitrary sway, and discard her.

Nugent

Nugent appears again, is despised by most people, and seems at a loss which side of the question to take. He is a coxcomb, and worthy the notice of none but those devoted to *bon ton*. A sweet animal, truly!

The housekeeper here is a queer old creature, that at present is to me unfathomable. She prays and squeaks hymns with Mrs. Harpur, yet I think is not sincere in her professions of methodism. She is a new convert, I am told, since she came to the family, which is very lately. I fancy she wants to convert herself into the good graces of her Mistress.—She talks to me of keeping the passions in subordination,—then adds, that even that will have no effect, if I have not saving faith,—for faith, you must know, Miss, the apostle says, “co-
vers

vers a multitude of sins." "Good Madam, let *me* correct you there ; it is charity he speaks in favour of with those words", returns your provoking friend.

You shall have a little more of them all in my next, Adelaide. By that time perhaps Charles may have a wife. Heigh-ho !

Yours sincerely,

HARRIOT MEYNEL.

END of the SECOND VOLUME.